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## **Adaptation – Mimesis, Transformation, Interpretation**

Diplomová práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a že jsem uvedla všechny použité prameny a literaturu.

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# 1 Introduction

Adaptation is generally defined as “something produced by modification”<sup>1</sup> or “the action or process of adapting, fitting, or suiting one thing to another”.<sup>2</sup> In a more specific sense, adaptation in art is depicted as “a version of a literary composition rewritten for a different medium” or

the process of modifying a thing so as to suit new conditions: as the modification of a piece of music to suit a different instrument or purpose; the alteration of a dramatic composition to suit a different audience; the alteration of form which a word of one language often undergoes to make it fit the etymological or phonetic system of another.<sup>3</sup>

This is just a sample of a number of definitions of adaptation. There are a large number of works of art that can be adapted and an infinite number of ways in which they can be adapted. The relation between film and literature becomes more and more fundamental to the adaptation studies of today. A great amount of time has elapsed between such filmic attempts as *Roundhay Garden Scene*<sup>4</sup> from the end of the nineteenth century and 3D movies screened in multiplex cinemas at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Film has become one of the significant tools of communication and entertainment. It plays the role of an antipode sui generis in some cases and of a complement sui generis in others. Constant interaction between film and literature leads to the diminishing and deconstructing of their boundaries, causing their fundamental features to become transmigrant, ubiquitous.

Adaptations of literary works, or transformations of literature into film, have become prominent in the last century:

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<sup>1</sup> *Webster's Universal Dictionary and Thesaurus*, (Montreal: Tormont Publications Inc., 1993) 56.

<sup>2</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) 23.

<sup>3</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) 23.

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia, “Roundhay Garden Scene,” 11 Mar. 2007

<<http://tools.wikimedia.de/~gmaxwell/jorbis/JOrbisPlayer.php?path=Roundhay+Garden+Scene.ogg>>

One estimate claims that 30 percent of the movies today derive from novels and that 80 percent of the books classified as best sellers have been adapted to the cinema. If the connection between the two practices has persisted so adamantly through the years, it seems especially pressing now, at the end of the twentieth century, as an index of why the movies are important, why literature still matters, and what both have to offer a cultural period in which boundaries are continually being redrawn.<sup>5</sup>

The interconnection of film and literature has generated a number of debates, not only on the professional (literary/film critical) level, but on the dilettantish as well. Adaptations are immensely popular, attracting vast audiences. According to the Internet Movie Database, out of the top ten highest-earnings films ever, seven were adaptations.<sup>6</sup> The Academy Awards allots a separate award for adapted screenplays, thus distinguishing them from original ones.<sup>7</sup>

Literary works are often rewritten as screenplays and screenplays of successful movies are often turned into literary works. Such phenomena tend to be read as encroachment of visual culture upon the traditional culture of literacy.<sup>8</sup> As John Ellis puts it:

<sup>5</sup> Timothy Corrigan, *Film and Literature: an Introduction and Reader* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1999) 2.

<sup>6</sup> According to: IMDb, *The Internet Movie Database*, 11 Mar. 2007

<<http://imdb.com/boxoffice/alltimegross?region=non-us>>.

<sup>7</sup> A table of the best original and adapted screenplays of the new millenium. Out of seven Best Pictures of the year five were adaptations.

<b><u>Best Original Screenplay (category since 1940)</u></b>	<b><u>Best Adapted Screenplay (category since 1928), Adapted Screenplay (renamed in 2002)</u></b>	<b><u>Best Picture (Adapted screenplay in bold)</u></b>
2000: Almost Famous	2000: Traffic	2000: Gladiator
2001: Gosford Park	2001: A Beautiful Mind	2001: <b>A Beautiful Mind</b>
2002: Hable con ella	2002: The Pianist	2002: <b>Chicago</b>
2003: Lost in Translation	2003: The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King	2003: <b>The Lord of the Rings</b>
2004: Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind	2004: Sideways	2004: <b>Million Dolar Baby</b>
2005: Crash	2005: Brokeback Mountain	2005: Crash
2006: Little Miss Sunshine	2006: The Departed	2006: <b>The Departed</b>

<sup>8</sup> Corrigan, 5.

Adaptation trades upon the memory of the novel, a memory that can derive from actual reading, or as is more likely with a classic of literature, a generally circulated cultural memory. The adaptation consumes this memory, aiming to efface it with the presence of its own images. The successful adaptation is one that is able to replace the memory of the novel with the process of a filmic or televisual representation.<sup>9</sup>

Once again Ellis calls attention to the increasing importance of film and at the same time points out the close relations between film and literature in general. Robert Stam draws attention to a widespread cliché when claiming that for many people literature will always have “axiomatic superiority” over any cinematic adaptation of it because of its seniority as an art form. Stam offers a possible explanation when putting this well established hierarchy into relation with what he calls “iconophobia”, i.e. the suspicion of the visual, and the concomitant “logophilia”, i.e. the love of the word as sacred. Consequentially, he continues, adaptations are, by definition, “belated, middlebrow, or culturally inferior”.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, it can be said that approaches seeking to dismantle the hierarchy and look for a way to embrace film and literature in a culturally productive manner are quite rare.

As mentioned above, adaptation is either a process or a product. It may be no accident that the same word is used for both as the product inevitably bears signs of the process itself. Art theorist E. H. Gombrich suggests that if an artist stands before a landscape with a pencil in hand, he or she will “look for those aspects which can be rendered in lines”; if the artist has a paintbrush, his or her vision of the same landscape will emerge as masses instead. A poet, by the same analogy, will be attracted to representing different aspects of a story than the creator of a musical spectacular; and the linear and single-track medium of language will produce a

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<sup>9</sup> John Ellis, “The Literary Adaptation: an introduction,” *Screen* 27 Jan.. 1982: 3.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Stam, “Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation,” in J. Naremore (ed.), *Film Adaptation* (London and New York: The Athlone Press, 2000) 54 – 78.

different version than the multi-track film, with its amalgam of music, sound, and moving visual image.<sup>11</sup>

In my thesis I shall attempt to approach adaptation as a full-value counterpart to the original. A critical approach towards adaptation should be as rigorous as it is in the case of a literary work; the relation towards what is being adapted should not be neglected but, at the same time, should not be overestimated. Demands of authenticity and fidelity should be replaced by emphasis on creative mimesis, transformation and interpretation.

In the following chapter I shall give a selective review of definitions of adaptation in general, discuss them and accompany them with a number of examples. The division of adaptation into several categories should not be taken as a finite systematization but rather as a means of preparing the ground for further discussion. In the third chapter I shall examine film adaptation from the theoretical and practical point of view. I will introduce various approaches illustrating the general shift from overestimating the criterion of fidelity, by taking it as the most important criterion for evaluating film adaptations, towards more complex attitudes that take other aspects into account.

My focus in the fourth chapter moves into the practical sphere. Through the example of two adaptations, one literary and one filmic, I will strive to trace transformation of the material while it is passing through various media and I will try to interpret the transformation from the position of reader/spectator. I will conclude this thesis with an attempt to point out new ways of evaluating adaptations.

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<sup>11</sup> E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (New York: Panther, 1961) 65.



## **2 Categorization of Adaptation**

Because of the complex nature of adaptation it is rather problematic to provide a simple definition. Based on a combination of several points of view, literary adaptation could be, according to my point of view, roughly divided into five categories. 1. Adaptation as literary imitation of other authors or genres; enduring throughout the whole literary tradition, typical for certain historical periods; 2. adaptation as literary imitation with a critical or even lampooning spin, generally designated as parody; 3. adaptation as “reworking” of a literary work of art to suit a different audience; adaptations for children for instance; 4. adaptation as a transfer of a work of art from one language to a different language; i.e., translation 5. adaptation as the transfer of a work of art from one medium to another; film adaptations of literary works for example. This categorization should not be understood as an attempt at an absolute definition of literary adaptation but rather as an initiation into adaptation theory, as an example of one possible point of view, open to supplementation or alteration.

### **2.1 Adaptation as Literary Imitation**

*The imitative art is an inferior who marries an inferior, and has inferior offspring. (Plato)*

*Nature created similarities. One need only think of mimicry. The highest capacity for producing similarities, however is man's. His gift of seeing resemblances is nothing other than a drudiment of the powerful compulsion in former times to become and behave like something else. Perhaps there is none of his higher functions in which his mimetic faculty does not play a decisive role. (Walter Benjamin)*

#### **2.1.1 From Plato to Deleuze**

The most ancient theories about art are mimetic theories according to which art mimics reality. The first appearance of the word “mimesis” is in Plato’s dialogues, where it

epitomises an already complicated idea.<sup>12</sup> Plato occupies himself with three categories: firstly, the Ideas, ever-lasting, true, created by God (the idea of a bed for example); secondly, reflections of these ideas in the sensual world (a bed made by a carpenter for example); thirdly, reflections of the reflections of the Ideas (a bed depicted on a painting, for example). In other words, he believed that mimesis was manifested in “particulars” which resemble or imitate the forms from which they are derived; thus mimetic world (the world of representation and the phenomenological world) is inherently inferior in that it consists of imitations which will always be subordinate or subsidiary to their original.<sup>13</sup> Shadows, reflections on water-level, mirror reflections and fine arts are all included in the third category. Fine arts are, in comparison with shadows and water and mirror reflections perceived as dangerous because of their pernicious influence on the audience. They do not show the Truth and therefore perplex the audience and, instead of cultivating the spectators’ rationality they are merely nourishing their senses:<sup>14</sup>

This was the conclusion at which I was seeking to arrive when I said that painting or drawing, and imitation in general, when doing their own proper work, are far removed from truth, and the companions and friends and associates of a principle within us which is equally removed from reason, and that they have no true or healthy aim.<sup>15</sup>

And further:”poetry feeds and waters the passions instead of drying them up; she lets them rule, although they ought to be controlled, if mankind is ever to increase in happiness and virtue“.<sup>16</sup> Plato excluded poetry from his ideal state on the basis of its imitative character. Nevertheless, as one can read in the third Book, he contradicts himself when he ascribes

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<sup>12</sup> M. H. Abrams, *Zrcadlo a lampa (Romantické teorie a tradice estetického myšlení)* (Praha: Triáda, 2001) 17.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Edwards, “Mimesis,” *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1967 ed.

<sup>14</sup> Edwards, 18.

<sup>15</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, Classical Library, 1 Mar 2007

<<http://www.classicallibrary.org/plato/dialogues/republic/book10.htm>>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

certain importance to poetry such as in the process of making the young familiar with the true doctrines, or in reflecting the qualities proper to the character of guardian and in the consequent inducement of these in the souls of the inhabitants: “For we mean to employ for our souls’ health the rougher and severer poet or story-teller, who will imitate the style of the virtuous only, and will follow those models which we prescribed at first when we began the education of our soldiers.”<sup>17</sup> Plato therefore lays the foundation-stone of the wall of firm tradition of disrespect or even disdain towards imitation and at the very same time offers an example of imitation being beneficial under specific conditions.

In contrast to Plato, Aristotle operates with only two categories in his *Poetics* which leads to a diverse apprehension of the term mimesis. Plato and Aristotle agree in the notion of a work of art being created as a copy of the sensual world. The absence of the world of ideas in Aristotle’s perspective leads him to a much more indulgent evaluation of art. Plato’s criticism of art based on the fact that it is “thrice removed from the king and from the truth”<sup>18</sup> peters out. Not only does Aristotle extricate art from the thralldom under a higher category of truth, but he also uses the term mimesis as a means to characterize and consequently differentiate art from anything else in the world. As a result, art is perceived as an independent category, relieved of competition with other human activities.<sup>19</sup>

As mentioned before, Aristotle adopted Plato’s thought of the imitative constitution of art. Whereas Plato put emphasis on the relation between a work of art and the Ideas, Aristotle accentuated the relation between a work of art and the world. Mimetic function, *primus inter pares*,<sup>20</sup> played a fundamental role in the process of categorization of various genres of art.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Abrams, 19.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

This “species of imitation,” as Aristotle calls poetry, can be further divided according to several aspects:

Epic poetry and tragedy, comedy also and dithyrambic poetry, and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms, are all in their general conception modes of imitation. They differ, however, from one another in three respects - the medium, the objects, the manner or mode of imitation, being in each case distinct.<sup>21</sup>

Aristotle perceives imitation as something positive because of its naturalness. When he discusses the origins of poetry in chapter three of his *Poetics* he indicates two probable causes which “poetry in general seems to have sprung from, each of them lying deep in our nature”: first, the instinct of imitation, which is implanted in man from childhood and allows him to learn; second, the pleasure felt in things imitated. Imitation seems to inosculate the whole conception of art of Aristotle: it is the premise – imitation as an innate ability of man (together with the instinct for harmony and rhythm “persons, therefore, starting with this natural gift developed by degrees their special aptitudes, till their rude improvisations gave birth to poetry”<sup>22</sup>); the process – poetry being created by imitating of the world; and the outcome – poetry as a copy/imitation of the world.

The term mimesis remained permanently present in art theories until the eighteenth century, after that reappearing now and again (for instance in the nineteenth century realism or in Auerbach’s *Mimesis* from the middle of the twentieth century). Its usage and understanding differed considerably but the basic concept of reflection/depiction/imitation/copy/picture remained.<sup>23</sup> The nineteenth century and especially the twentieth century introduced many new theories and approaches. Notwithstanding the vast

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<sup>21</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, Classics, 2 Apr 2007  
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/classics/resources/poetics/poettran.htm#Chapter26>.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Abrams, 20-21.

number of new perspectives born in the plurality of the modern world, various theoreticians considered it important to go back in time and make use of some ancient terms, even if just for the purpose of differentiation or even extermination. Such was the destiny of the term mimesis.

Gilles Deleuze poses the question “What is meant by the “overthrow of Platonism”?” at the beginning of his “Plato and the Simulacrum”. He thus uses Nietzsche’s ideas to define the task of his own philosophy. Emphasizing the necessity of bringing the motivation for the overthrow of Plato’s philosophy to light, Deleuze tracks the development of the theory of representation, the relation between a copy/imitation and the original. Plato’s theory of essences and Ideas based on the hierarchy: Ideas (original) – copy (“the good copy, which is good as of its intrinsic relation to the Idea of the model”<sup>24</sup>) – the simulacrum (the bad copy; an image that does not resemble the original; it does not have an internal relationship to a model but only an external relationship built on the “model of the Other (*l’Autre*) from which there flows an internalized dissemblance”<sup>25</sup>) should be replaced by a theory of difference and becoming. In other words, instead of Plato’s violent repression, Deleuze suggests reconsideration. Deleuze sees Platonic mimesis as a power-based relationship in which the sovereignty of the original is to be transmitted to the good copy, not usurped by the bad copy. He defines the aim of Platonism as “to impose a limit on this becoming, to order it according to the same, to render it similar — and, for that part which remains rebellious, to repress it as deeply as possible, to shut it up in a cavern at the bottom of the Ocean”.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, overturning of Platonism can be achieved by denying the primacy of the original over the

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<sup>24</sup> Seyda Ozturk, “Simulation Reloaded,” Cinetext, 14 Mar 2007  
<[http://cinetext.philo.at/magazine/ozturk/simulation\\_reloaded.html](http://cinetext.philo.at/magazine/ozturk/simulation_reloaded.html)>.

<sup>25</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990) 258.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

copy, affirming the rights of simulacra among icons and copies and thus enabling one to explore the dimensions of an unreasonable and limitless becoming.<sup>27</sup>

### 2.1.2 Originality in Imitation

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle viewed mimesis as fundamental expressions of our human experience within the world – as means of learning about nature that, through the perceptual experience, allow us to get closer to the “real”.<sup>28</sup> He distinguished between poetry and history, history offering a set of separate descriptive facts, poetry emphasizing integrity (imitating complete deeds and characters according to the unity of time and action, stressing the moralist aim), privileging poetry because of its ideal and therefore philosophical traits. A couple of centuries later, mimesis was enhanced to a position of generally acknowledged educational method. Cicero, in *De Oratore*, and Quintilian, in *Institutio Oratorio*, recommend imitation of great models to the students of rhetoric. Both Cicero and Quintilian assented to the general notion that whatever had been said, done or written in the past was common property and can therefore be further used. Seneca puts his seal upon this conviction when he says, “The best ideas are common property. Whatever is well said by anyone is mine.”<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to claim that students of eloquence were taught to blindly copy their notable predecessors. The basic scheme they were to follow in the field of rhetoric was threefold: *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *elocutio*. Invention, which means “invention” or “discovery”, was a fore phase of any speech in which the orator had to draw from his own creative sources. Quintilian himself claimed that unless there is originality in imitation there can be no progress in literary values.

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<sup>27</sup> Seyda Ozturk, “Simulation Reloaded,” Cinetext, 14 Mar 2007 <[http://cinetext.philo.at/magazine/ozturk/simulation\\_reloaded.html](http://cinetext.philo.at/magazine/ozturk/simulation_reloaded.html)>.

<sup>28</sup> Michelle Puetz, “mimesis,” *Keywords Glossary*, 10 Apr 2007 <<http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/mimesis.htm>>.

<sup>29</sup> Seneca, *World of Quotes*, 11 Apr 2007 <[http://www.worldofquotes.com/author/Seneca-\(Lucius-Annaeus-Seneca\)/1/index.html](http://www.worldofquotes.com/author/Seneca-(Lucius-Annaeus-Seneca)/1/index.html)>.

Originality in imitation was the chief goal of every aspiring poet. It was achieved through the juxtaposing and combining of old material with new and embellishing the expressions with an idiosyncratic touch. Though modeled on a classic work of art, the final outcome was a unique artwork inspired by tradition but at the same time peculiarly one's own. It was believed that constant attention to the assimilation of ways of thought and feeling and expression of the great creates in the poet a habit of thinking and feeling after the manner of his own model. Armed with this acquired nobility of sentiment, the poet can reinterpret for his own day the truth and myths of the past, supplementing them with the fruits of his own experience and observation.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, mere adaptation and reinterpretation of old materials were not considered altogether sufficient to guarantee an outstanding position for a young poet. A peremptory requirement was to improve upon one's models.

The very same authors who were propagating imitation of great works of the past became subjects of imitation for the generations of their descendants. During the Renaissance, revival of classical aesthetics and forms intensified interest in Greek and Roman culture in consequence of which works of Plato or Cicero enthralled contemporary scholars. One of many examples is Cosimo de Medici, an Italian merchant prince who gathered a circle of humanists who collected, studied, expounded, and imitated the classics. He also founded the Platonic Academy, an institution for the translation of Plato's works and the propagation of his ideas.<sup>31</sup>

The doctrine of imitation of ancient authors had one major effect. Imitation of particular classical writers was accompanied by imitation of classical genres. Subsequently, many "forgotten" literary forms were reborn and flourished, such as the epic and satire and, most of all, dramatic genres of comedy and tragedy. For instance, as a result of thriving theaters of the seventeenth century, English renaissance is often justly hallmarked as "the age

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<sup>30</sup> K. Zahava, *Selected Writings of Richard McKeon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 33.

<sup>31</sup> "Cosimo de' Medici," *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*, 17 Mar 2007  
<<http://www.answers.com/topic/cosimo-de-medici>>.

of Shakespeare'. This ingenious author of dozens of plays, this grand literary figure of western world whose works are alive even 400 years after his death was himself borrowing from or imitating older authors.<sup>32</sup>

From the French royal court of Louis XIV classicism spread throughout Europe in the second half of seventeenth century. Classicism, when applied generally, means clearness, elegance, and symmetry. More precisely, the term refers to the admiration and imitation of Greek and Roman literature, art, and architecture.

Classical and Renaissance discussions of imitation fall into three basic categories. The first, defines imitation as copying or following a model as accurately as possible. A second and much more influential approach describes it as an endeavor not to reproduce a model exactly but to transform that model in a manner suited to the imitator's personality and situation. The third approach to imitation defined imitation as an endeavor to compete with and surpass a model rather than merely alter it.<sup>33</sup>

The second and the third approach, emphasizing the ability of the author to transform, reinterpret and bring new perspectives, became prevalent in the more recent literary tradition and have been preserved, with minor alterations, until today. In early twentieth century Europe and the United States there was a renewed interest in Greek literature, and classical models were somewhat revived, as in the work of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot. T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, an elegiac but intimidating summoning up of a vast and dissonant range of cultures and literatures,<sup>34</sup> could be described as a touchstone of modern literature and a

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<sup>32</sup> John Erskine Hankins, "Shakespeare's Derived Imagery" in *Modern Language Notes* Feb. 1955: 134-138.

<sup>33</sup> George E. Rowe, *Distinguishing Jonson: Imitation, Rivalry, and the Direction of a Dramatic Career* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1988) 28.

<sup>34</sup> According to Wikipedia, sources from which Eliot quotes or to which he alludes include the works of: Homer, Sophocles, Petronius, Virgil, Ovid, Saint Augustine of Hippo, Dante Alighieri, William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, Gérard de Nerval, Thomas Kyd, Geoffrey Chaucer, Thomas Middleton, John Webster, Joseph Conrad, John Milton, Andrew Marvell, Charles Baudelaire, Richard Wagner, Oliver Goldsmith, Herman Hesse, Aldous Huxley, Paul Verlaine, Walt Whitman and Bram Stoker. He also makes extensive use of Scriptural writings including the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, the Hindu Brihad-Aranyaka-Upanishad and the Buddha's Fire



brilliant example of creative imitation having its place in the modern world.<sup>35</sup> Eliot uses a brilliant method of mirroring (the first four sections of the poem correspond with the Greek classical elements of Earth, Air, Fire and Water), juxtaposing (Latin and Greek epigraph precede the poem in English; words or sentences in German, French or Sanscrit are dispersed throughout the text; together with the languages whole cultures are juxtaposed and thus new connotations and meanings are awoken by the unexpected proximity) and alluding (at the end of the third section Eliot's notes say that he is alluding to both the buddhist and the christian tradition of sermon – fire sermon and sermon on the mount). Eliot not only disengages himself from the tradition but he seems to be floating above it. In his upper, god-like position he picks what he likes best and places these pieces into the context of the twentieth century, creating thus a cultural mosaic of the world.

## **2.2 Adaptation as Parody**

The Greek roots of the word parody (paroidía) are *par-* (which can mean “beside” or “counter, against”) and *-ody* (“song”, as in *ode*). Thus, the original Greek word has been sometimes taken to mean “counter-song, a song sung alongside another”, an imitation “set against” the original. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* provides a definition of parody in literature: “a form of satirical criticism or comic mockery that imitates the style and manner of a particular writer or school of writers so as to emphasize the weakness of the writer or the overused conventions of the school”.<sup>36</sup> Another definition is provided by The Oxford English Dictionary, which contrasts parody with burlesque and travesty:

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Sermon, and of cultural and anthropological studies such as Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (particularly its study of the Wasteland motif in Celtic mythology)

<sup>35</sup>“Wasteland,” Wikipedia, 28 Mar 2007 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Wasteland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wasteland)>

<sup>36</sup> “parody,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 28 Mar 2007 <<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9058548/parody>>.

In literature, a work in which the style of an author is closely imitated for comic effect or in ridicule. Differing from both burlesque (by the depth of its technical penetration) and travesty (which treats dignified subjects in a trivial manner), parody mercilessly exposes the tricks of manner and thought of its victim and therefore cannot be written without a thorough appreciation of the work it ridicules.<sup>37</sup>

Parodies have existed since literature began. Aristophanes splendidly parodied the plays of Euripides; Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605–15) parodied chivalric romances; Henry Fielding's novel *Joseph Andrews* (1742) parodied Samuel Richardson's moral novel *Pamela* (1740); and Max Beerbohm's *A Christmas Garland* (1912) wickedly parodies such authors as Kipling, Conrad, and Henry James. The first usage of the word *parody* in English cited in the Oxford English Dictionary is in Ben Jonson, in *Every Man in His Humour* in 1598: "A Parodie, a parodie! to make it absurder than it was." The next notable citation comes from John Dryden in 1693, who annexed a definition of the term parody, as he was aware of the shift of the meaning of the word parody. In his "Preface to the Satires", he says: "We may find, that they were Satyrique Poems, full of Parodies; that is, of Verses patch'd up from great Poets, and turn'd into another Sence than their Author intended them." Dryden's definition is therefore a departure from the previous usage because he implies satire. He adapts what was still a foreign term (parody) in order to apply it to a recent literary subgenre that had no name: the mock-heroic. Dryden's *MacFlecknoe* is an example of a poem that makes use of parody in order to ridicule (an imitation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, ridiculing Thomas Shadwell, a minor dramatist). The mock-heroic as a genre is generally credited to Samuel Butler and his poem *Hudibras*.<sup>38</sup> When conscious, the contrast of a very serious or exalted style with a very frivolous or worthless subject is parody. When the combination is

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<sup>37</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) 123.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

unconscious, it is bathos (derived from Alexander Pope's parody of Longinus, "Peri Bathos").<sup>39</sup>

Jonathan Swift is the first English author to apply the word parody to narrative prose. It may be a misunderstanding of Swift's own definition of parody that has caused the term to since become to refer to any stylistic imitation that is intended to discredit. In "The Apology for the &c.", one of the prefaces to his *A Tale of a Tub*, Swift claims that a parody is the imitation of an author one wishes to expose. As a consequence, parody seems to differ very little from mockery and burlesque. Moreover, given Swift's attention to language, it is likely that he was aware of this. In fact, Swift's definition of parody might well be a parody of Dryden's presumed habit of explaining the obvious or using loan words.<sup>40</sup> After Jonathan Swift, the term parody was used almost exclusively to refer to mockery, especially in narrative.

In the twentieth century Ezra Pound, in his *ABC of Reading*, introduces a concept of parody as a means of learning; he has some advice for teachers endeavoring to introduce their pupils to the art of reading verse: "Let him parody some poem he finds ridiculous, either because of falsity in the statement, or falsity in the disposition of the writer, or for pretentiousness of one kind or another, or for any other reason that strikes his risible faculties, his sense of irony."<sup>41</sup> Such an exercise, says Pound, might test both the poem parodied and the parodist. The joke might be on either one. Furthermore, this exercise should help to distinguish good parodies from bad, for the students should be asked to recognize one from the other.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> "parody," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 28 Mar 2007 <<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9058548/parody>>.

<sup>41</sup> Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1987) 26.



A postmodern theorist Linda Hutcheon places parody (often called ironic quotation, pastiche, appropriation, or intertextuality) within the context of “this general modern interrogation of the nature of self-reference and legitimacy”<sup>43</sup> and thus understands it as one of the major forms of modern self-reflexivity, as a form of inter-art discourse. Rather than pushing the term into a well-established category, Hutcheon examines it from number of different perspectives and uses general definitions such as parody being “one of the major modes concerning the formal and thematic construction of texts”. An example of Joyce’s *Ulysses* can serve as elucidation. Hutcheon sees the extended parallels to the Homer’s *Odyssey* as parallels with an ironic difference: Molly waiting for her husband has remained

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<sup>42</sup> As a visual example of parody Wikipedia shows a picture of Mona Lisa by Marcel Duchamp: Marcel Duchamp’s Dadaist painting parodies DaVinci’s *Mona Lisa* (1503-1507). The avant-garde art world has also taken note of the undeniable fact of the *Mona Lisa*’s popularity. Because of the painting’s overwhelming stature, Dadaists and Surrealists often produce modifications and caricatures. In 1919, Marcel Duchamp, one of the most influential Dadaists, made a *Mona Lisa* parody by adorning a cheap reproduction with a moustache and a goatee, as well as adding the rude inscription L.H.O.O.Q., when read out loud in French sounds like “Elle a chaud au cul” (translating to “she has a hot arse” as a manner of implying the woman in the painting is in a state of sexual excitement and availability). This was intended as a Freudian joke, referring to Leonardo’s alleged homosexuality.

<sup>43</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A theory of Parody – The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985) 2.

anything but chaste. Joyce's goal is nevertheless not to mock or ridicule but to use a classic literary work as a point of departure towards the contemporary world.

Hutcheon also claims that parody is considered one of the basic features of postmodernity, both by its calumniator and its defenders. Setting herself against the prevailing view among many postmodern theorists that "postmodernism offers a value-free, decorative, de-historicized quotation of past forms and that this is a most apt mode for a culture like our own that is oversaturated with images"<sup>44</sup> Hutcheon argues that parody, employing the double process of installing and ironizing, signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference.<sup>45</sup> Hutcheon further claims that parody not only connects present with the past but also de-doxifies (Hutcheon's term), in other words it unsettles all doxa, all accepted beliefs and ideologies and thus offers an non-ideological interpretation.

A closely related genre is pastiche. There are two definitions of the term: 1. "A medley of various ingredients; a hotchpotch, farrago, jumble. This meaning accords with etymology: *pastiche* is the French version of greco-roman dish *pasticcio*, which designated a kind of pie made of many different ingredients." 2. a literary technique employing a generally light-hearted, jocular imitation of another's style.<sup>46</sup> In the postmodern sensibility, blank parody, in which an artist takes the skeletal form of another art work and places it in a new context without ridiculing it, is common. The transformation of minor characters Rosencrantz and Guildenstern from Shakespeare's drama *Hamlet* into the principal characters in a comedic perspective on the same events in the play (and film) *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* by Thomas Stoppard can serve as an example. Nevertheless, the classical examples of

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<sup>44</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London & New York: Routledge, 1989) 93.

<sup>45</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A theory of Parody – The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985) 8.

<sup>46</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1989) 124.

parodies as literary or artistic works that imitate the characteristic style of an author or a work for comic effect or ridicule are quite common in the postmodern times as well. Many examples of parodies can be found in popular culture, such as Michael Gerber's *Barry Trotter*, a parody on J. K. Rowling's immensely popular Harry Potter series or Henry N. Beard and Douglas C. Kenney's *Bored of the Rings*, imitating J. R. R. Tolkien's trilogy *Lord of the Rings*.

Some highly-regarded savants of an earlier and more principled generation than our own gave currency to the opinion that the writer of parody was a rather shabby fellow practicing an irreverent and parasitic art and an enemy within the gates of the true, the beautiful, and the good. According to this standard, the collector of parody, having not even the excuse of expressing his own aesthetic ego, must be one of the most abandoned of literary riff-raff,

says Robert Falk in his introduction to a collection of parody of American writers.<sup>47</sup> As well as literary critics, or critics in general, are often frowned upon for their criticizing of what others created while not being able to create anything themselves, so are the parodists condemned for mere ridiculing of others' works but not producing any themselves. Nevertheless, to be a good parodist, as well as a good critic, one needs to be in possession of a special kind of talent. A good parody should contain a certain amount of real criticism of what the author is saying as well as his manner of saying it. Successful parody holds in equilibrium two opposing attitudes towards its subject - satire and sympathy. It involves an amalgamation of the satiric mood with a thoroughgoing understanding of the style it burlesques. At its best it

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<sup>47</sup> Robert P. Falk, *American Literature in Parody: A Collection of Parody, Satire, and Literary Burlesque of American Writers Past and Present* (Burgess Green: Twayne Publishers, 1955).

holds the razor edge between admiration and ridicule. To accomplish this requires superior art and mimetic talent.

### **2.3 Adaptation as a Transformation of the Original to Suit a Different Audience**

Another reason for adapting is to suit an audience for which the work of art was not originally designed. Literary texts are often trimmed to become “readable” for a specific group of readers, for which is the original inapprehensible. A typical example is an adaptation for children.

Literary works originally designed for adults are in some cases “reworked” for children. Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* or Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, books can serve as famous examples. In the process of adaptation the work of art is rewritten so that it matches the requirements for children’s literature, such as: it is plot-oriented, with more dialogues and events, fewer descriptions and ruminations; it is written in simpler language; it is relatively short; it contains illustrations (in particular, in books intended for younger children); it has a happy ending, in which good triumphs over evil, and so forth. Adaptations for children are often didactic, attempting to educate children about societal and behavioral issues. Therefore, even adult books considered difficult to read are adapted for children, such as the Bible - Trevor Barnes’s *Bible for Children* or Shakespeare’s plays – Carolyn Meyer’s *Loving Will Shakespeare*. Nevertheless, the most frequent adaptations are various adaptations of antique stories – Anna Milbourne’s *Aesop’s Fables*, myths and legends – Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz’s *American Indian Myths and Legends*.

Adaptations for children enable the young audience to go through a reader’s adventure in ordinary circumstances reserved for more experienced readers. However, it is essential to keep in mind that adaptation goes hand in hand with alteration; in other words, that a version designed for children differs considerably from the original. From my own reading

experience, I was rather shocked how different Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is from the Czech version for children by Josef V. Pleva.

Pleva's adaptation from the year 1956 is in many respects under the thumb of the time of its creation and thus affected adversely. The 50's in communist Czechoslovakia were epitomized by fear and despair. The communist regime consolidated its power by artificial trials, executions, imprisonments and the rule of terror.<sup>48</sup> Authors were forced to write according to the strict rules approved by the communist party or they were to expect cruel punishments. Books for children, who symbolized the bright future of the nation, were monitored quite attentively. Elements such as the importance of work in human life or the ability to learn, create and improve corresponded with the official rhetorics and were therefore emphasized. On the contrary, meditative passages and openly religious parts were ruthlessly omitted or transformed into more suitable themes such as antiracism. As far as the formal structure is concerned, the whole novel was deproblematized by squeezing it into a pattern of adventurous novels with happy endings. Ich-form was substituted by er-form since an objective, depersonalized narrator offers more space for the educational constituent.

Jiří Rambousek in his "Do Children Read what the Author wrote?"<sup>49</sup> calls the tendency towards shifts in texts, both intentional and unintentional, *covert adaptations*. *Covert adaptation* as opposed to *overt adaptation* is closely connected with translation, it is in a way hidden under the widespread notion of an equation between a translation and the original text. According to Rambousek, there are four types of modifications that take place in translations of children's literature and therefore transform these into adaptations sui generis: 1. shortening the texts (omissions or other procedures; sometimes integrating more sources into one) 2. adding passages (rare; an example: Jaroslav Císař's introductory passage

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<sup>48</sup> Milada Horakova, a Czech politician accused of conspiracy and high treason, was executed on 27th June 1950. Not even instances asking for pardon for Horakova from such personages as Albert Einstein, Winston Churchill or Eleanor Roosevelt did discourage the communists from their terrible deed.

<sup>49</sup> In *Children's Literature in English at the Turn of the Millennium* (Hradec Králové: The British Council, Gaudeamus, 2002) 147-160.



in his translation of *Through the Looking-Glass* in order to compensate for the reader's lack of cultural background) 3. changing the style and language of the text (narrative form, vocabulary, syntax and so forth) 4. shifting the whole message of the text/its semantic value (Pleva's *Robinson Crusoe*'s translation). He then lists motivations for these modifications. The first type, ideological motivations, stem from the intentions or ideologies of an author, publisher or, in a wider context, political system. Such is the case of Pleva's translation of *Robinson Crusoe* in which religious passages were replaced by other motifs – Robinson's thoughts of God were substituted by thoughts about his mother for instance. Ideological adaptations are, nevertheless, not limited to totalitarian societies. Attempts to "improve" books and thus acquit them of unwanted, in this case racist, connotations are connected with books like *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Fin*. The second type is a moralistic motivation. At the end of Jaromír Hořejš's translation of Arthur Ransome's *Winter Holiday* a passage was removed which included "bad language" (though present throughout the book), probably under the conviction that the final message of a children's book should be moral and therefore deprived of vulgarisms. Next, there is the motivation for adaptation based on difficult or (allegedly) impossible translation – a practice that appears in all types of texts and in all times (for example a number of *Alice in Wonderland* translations in which many passages based on word-play and puns were omitted). Pedagogical/literary motivations include the tendency to help the reader and to improve the text. The first tendency is mirrored in the author's attempt to enable the reader an easier access to the text. The most frequent are simplifications and additional explanatory notes. The second tendency takes usually the form of omissions and additions. Reasons for omissions are similar to those that Rambousek introduced in the category of moralistic and difficult translation-modifications. An interesting example of additions is Jan Kantůrek's usage of footnotes in his Terry Pratchett's translations.<sup>50</sup> The last

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<sup>50</sup> Kantůrek adds humorous footnotes to the original text which is justified by the superb quality of the translation and by the approval expressed by Pratchett himself.

type of motivation, changing the target group, is stamped by Rambousek as latently dangerous due to its unintentionality (even though it exists in the intentional form as well). It usually takes on the form of narrowing down the target group, i.e. modification of the text to suit children of a certain age-group. According to Rambousek, when children are reading “difficult” passages they are either “positively motivated by the need of intellectual effort”<sup>51</sup> or they “survive” with no major harms and enjoy the passages while rereading them later in their lives.

Books originally written for adults but rewritten for children could be depicted with Rambousek’s term *overt adaptations*. A story is “overtly” transformed from one genre to another, in other words, adult literature is reworked so that it meets the requirements of children’s literature. A children’s book that has been translated into a different language does not undergo any genre transformation. Nevertheless, alterations of length, depth and of overall style due to the different cultural backgrounds of its readers are elements significant enough to classify these translations as adaptations, even though, to use Rambousek’s term again, merely *covert* ones. Supplementation of a missing context in the form of an additional text, and elisions where maintenance of the whole context would be either too complicated or too disturbing epitomize a great portion of the creative effort on the side of a translator/adapter. Children are a specific group of readers very closely connected to the culture of their homeland. By the rule of proximity they explore the “neighbouring worlds” of their family’s traditions first and then proceed to the “external worlds” of national and later on international traditions.<sup>52</sup> A translator/adapter has to be able to estimate his/her readership. Adaptations for children have to be not only readable and entertaining but also as comprehensible and educational as possible. Moreover, adaptations also have to appeal to the “secondary

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<sup>51</sup> Rambousek, 153.

<sup>52</sup> This process is rather changing lately as children of a relatively young age open the door to the external worlds via Internet just by a number of clicks.

readership” of parents who read the adaptations for their children, recommend them to their children or at least buy them for their children.

## 2.4 Translations

*I do not hesitate to read all good books in translations. What is really best in any book is translatable -- any real insight or broad human sentiment.*                      Ralph Waldo Emerson

The term “translation” connotes the art of comprising the interpretation of the meaning of a text in one language - the source text - and the production, in another language, of a new, equivalent text - the target text, or translation.<sup>53</sup>

The earliest period abundant in translations (especially into English) was probably the Renaissance which renewed interest in the Latin classics and created a demand for renderings of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (tr. by Arthur Golding, 1565–67), Vergil’s *Aeneid* (tr. by Gavin Douglas, c.1515; Henry Howard, earl of Surrey, c.1540; and Richard Stanyhurst, 1582), and Plutarch’s *Lives* (tr. by Sir Thomas North, 1579) for instance. At the end of the seventeenth century John Dryden, in his essays on translation, distinguished between three degrees of “faithfulness of a translated text to its original”.<sup>54</sup> Firstly, *metaphrase* is based on a word by word translation, or as Procházka puts it in the contemporary terminology, translation founded on lexical equivalence. Secondly, *paraphrase* or “keeping the author in view and following his sense”<sup>55</sup> privileges the transmission of ideas to lexical accuracy and thus enables to translate expressions which would decompose by word by word translation/metaphrase but which regain their livelihood in an equivalent pattern conveying the same idea in a different way/paraphrase. Dryden rated most highly this mode of translation, in accordance with the

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<sup>53</sup> “Translation,” *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989 ed.

<sup>54</sup> Martin Procházka, *Literary Theory. An Historical Introduction* (Prague: Charles University, 1997) 44.

<sup>55</sup> Procházka, 44.

general tendency of seventeenth century translation (starting with George Chapman's translations of Homer<sup>56</sup>). The third way is called *imitation* by Dryden and adaptation in contemporary terms by Procházka. This mode offers "actualization of the text, concretization of its meaning in the present time".<sup>57</sup> Dryden himself rewrote Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* into modern English and thus adapted them for the reader of his time.

In modern world, translation is a wide-spread means of communication. Notable translations of the nineteenth and twentieth century include Baudelaire's translations of the works of Edgar Allan Poe, Scott Moncrieff's translation of Proust, and Eustache Morel's translation of James Joyce.<sup>58</sup> American authors whose works have been translated into several European languages include Mark Twain, Jack London, Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, Upton Sinclair and many others. Even though contemporary translators have modern instruments at their disposal, such as computer-assisted translation (CAT) software tools, they still have to encounter and face up a great many difficulties since they not only translate a language but also a whole set of cultural values connected to the language.

## **2.5 Adaptation as a Transformation into a Different Medium**

Charles W. Kneupper put emphasis on two points when giving a piece of advice to the young enthusiasts working on theatrical adaptations of literary works for Readers Theatre presentation:

1. The importance of creating a script capable of effective presentation and the necessity of maintaining the integrity of the literature – those features contributing to the work's unique, unifying, and distinctive character
2. Keeping these points in mind,

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<sup>56</sup> Procházka, 44.

<sup>57</sup> Procházka, 44.

<sup>58</sup> "Translation," *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989 ed.

adapters can evaluate their options (omission of scenes, characters, dialogue, and so forth) when creating a script from any literary genre.<sup>59</sup>

These two points, i.e. preservation and transformation or convention and creativity, could be perceived as cornerstones of every adaptation, no matter what the genre is. The realm of art offers numerous “materials” to be used, borrowed, transformed, reworked or elaborated on. The following tables include a number of examples of adaptations; the first one follows the transformations of one work of art (except for the last line), the second one chooses cinema as the target medium and displays a number of resources:

1.

Resource medium	Target medium
Literature: a poem (Ovid’s <i>Metamorphoses</i> , the story of Pygmalion)	Theater: a play (G.B.Shaw’s <i>Pygmalion</i> )
Literature: a poem (Ovid’s <i>Metamorphoses</i> , the story of Pygmalion)	Fine arts: a painting (Jean-Léon Gérôme’s <i>Pygmalion and Galatea</i> )
Literature: a poem (Ovid’s <i>Metamorphoses</i> , the story of Pygmalion)	Music: an opera (Jean-Philippe Rameau’s <i>Pigmalion</i> )
Literature: a poem (Ovid’s <i>Metamorphoses</i> , the story of Pygmalion)	Music: a musical (Lerner and Loewe’s <i>My Fair Lady</i> )
Music: a musical (Lerner and Loewe’s <i>My Fair Lady</i> )	Cinema: a musical (Cukor’s <i>My Fair Lady</i> )

2.

Resource medium	Target medium
Literature: a novel (Cunningham’s <i>The Hours</i> )	Cinema: a film (Daldry’s <i>The Hours</i> )
Literature: a play (Albee’s <i>Who Is Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?</i> )	Cinema: a film (Nichols’s <i>Who is Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?</i> )
Visual Art: a comics (Miller’s <i>Sin City</i> )	Cinema: a film (Miller, Rodriguez and Tarantino’s <i>Sin City</i> )
Technology: a computer game (Tomb Raider) <sup>60</sup>	Cinema: a film ( West’s <i>Lara Croft</i> )

<sup>59</sup> Charles W. Kneupper, “A Theory of Adaptation for Readers Theater,” *Education Resources Information Centre*, 11 Feb. 2007  
[http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?\\_nfpb=true&\\_pageLabel=RecordDetails&ERICExtSearch\\_SearchValue\\_0=ED135020&ERICExtSearch\\_SearchType\\_0=eric\\_accno&objectId=0900000b800efe3f](http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=RecordDetails&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED135020&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=eric_accno&objectId=0900000b800efe3f)

<sup>60</sup> A computer game could be perceived as a specific kind of art combining the visual and interactiveness.

Every adaptation is limited by the main principles of its genre. It would be futile to go into detail of every possible adaptation taking place between a resource and target medium. Instead, the following chapter will be dedicated to the cinema, or more precisely film adaptation of a literary work of art. It will serve as an opening of the key issues connected to the filmic adaptation as well as a kind of bridging between the theoretical and practical part of this thesis.

### **3 Contemporary Theoretical Approaches to the Film Adaptation**

A typical contemporary approach towards film adaptation lies in seeking similarities and differences between the literary work and its filmic translation and in a consequent judgement based on a criterion of fidelity. The measurement of the success of a film adaptation is seen in its capacity to realize what are held the core meanings and values of the original literary text. In other words, the literary text is given a priority. This approach could be depicted as “compare-contrast approach” with literature playing a role of a model with which film is being compared and contrasted.

The enforcement of the opposition between the two media and their consequent contrasting could be partly illuminated by Kamilla Elliott’s description of the “particularly perplexing paradox”: “on one side, novels and films are diametrically opposed as “words” and “images”, at war both formally and culturally. J. Dudley Andrews is one of many to argue “the absolutely different semiotic systems of film and language”. On the other side of the paradox, novels and films are integrally related as “sister arts sharing formal techniques, audiences, values, sources, archetypes, narrative strategies, and contexts”.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Kamilla Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel* (Cambridge: University Press, 2003) 24.

Such an opposition between literature and film is further highlighted in George Bluestone's *Novels into Film: The Metamorphosis of Fiction into Cinema*. Bluestone puts emphasis on the incompatibility of the two media, neglects their sisterhood and thus places them in irreconcilable terms. He designates the novel as conceptual, linguistic, discursive, symbolic, and inspiring mental imagery, with time as its formative principle, and the film as perceptual, visual, presentational, literal, and given to visual images, with space as its formative principle. According to Bluestone, "The film and the novel (should) remain separate institutions, each achieving its best results by exploring unique and specific properties." Furthermore, he argues that filmic metaphor has a finite boundary limited to visual experience, whereas the literary image extends to the realm of infinite experience rendered by imagination. Even though Bluestone understands the filmmaker as a new author, not a mere translator, the notion of uniqueness of literature and limitations of film remain the major propositions of his approach.

C. Kenneth Pellow offers various case studies in his *Films as Critiques of Novels: Transformational Criticism* where he perceives film adaptation as a critical commentary upon its original literary text. Nevertheless, when he claims that "the film is almost invariably a shrunken version of the novel, a précis of sorts"<sup>62</sup> because of the time limit imposed upon it, or later, that the inability of the visual language to represent the verbal and economic conditions in the process of production causes the film to bear little resemblance to what the novelist thought s/he had done,<sup>63</sup> it is clear that his study is still based on the hierarchy privileging literature over film.

Faithful translation of a novel regarded not as the only criterion of film adaptation but rather as one of many ways and principles of adaptation; and comprehension of variations, diversions and deviations in a film as specific features that bring enrichment and constitute

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<sup>62</sup> C. K. Pellow, *Film as Critiques of Novels: Transformational Criticism* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1994) 2.

<sup>63</sup> Pellow, 8.

the core of significance of an adaptation, rather than a sign of failure, are features of an attempt to disavow from the traditional approach oriented on the capacity of the filmic performance to translate the literary work. One of the pioneers of this new direction was Geoffrey Wagner, who distinguished three categories of adaptations.<sup>64</sup> *Transposition* is the dominant method, in which the literary text is transferred as accurately as possible to film “with the minimum of apparent interference” (Branagh’s *Hamlet*, 1996, for instance). This method is perceived by Wagner as the least satisfactory as the film production is merely a reduced “book illustration”.<sup>65</sup> In *commentary*, the original is altered providing a favourable interpretation of the original literary work (as in Joffé’s *Scarlet Letter*, 1995) - Wagner calls it “creative restoration”.<sup>66</sup> In *analogy*, the original text is used as a point of departure; another work of art is created by a new author (director); “an analogy cannot be indicated a violation of a literary original since the director has not attempted to reproduce the original” (as in Amy Heckerling’s *Clueless*, 1995).<sup>67</sup>

Dudley Andrew offers an approach based on an incorporation of film adaptation into a wider cultural background and suggests three modes of adaptation: borrowing, intersecting and transforming. Borrowing, the most frequently employed mode, makes no claims to fidelity (*Clueless*). The artist uses the material of preceding success, the original is considered part of a “continuing form of archetype in culture”.<sup>68</sup> Intersecting attempts to recreate the distinctness of the original text, “the uniqueness of the original text is illuminated by the cinematic refraction of the original”<sup>69</sup> (*The Scarlet Letter*). In other words, the original is stabbed like a knife into the contemporary environment and the spot of the intersection becomes an adaptation. Transformation reproduces the “essential” text (*Hamlet*). The primary

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<sup>64</sup> G. Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1975) 43.

<sup>65</sup> Wagner, 44.

<sup>66</sup> Wagner, 44.

<sup>67</sup> Wagner, 44.

<sup>68</sup> Andrew Dudley, *Concepts in Film Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981) 14.

<sup>69</sup> Dudley, 15.



task is to translate the basic elements of the text (narrative structure or geographical settings), so that the skeleton of the original becomes the skeleton of the film.

Timothy Corrigan suggests four critical frameworks to study the practice of adaptation. Firstly, film and literature should be considered in a historical contextualization “in terms of their specific historical, national, and cultural contexts”.<sup>70</sup> Secondly, cinema requires equal time and attention that have been dedicated to literature, while neglecting cinema as a subject inferior to literature. Thirdly, Corrigan is interested in the actual process of adaptation:

Critical perspectives that align and distinguish film and literature are no longer confined to how film is or is not like a language or how expressive film may be of an author or how representative of a reality... Today there are other, if less broad, issues that complement these. The literary art of scriptwriting versus story writing, acting technique as it differs in the theater and on the screen or the different ways readers and spectators make sense of their experience before a page or screen are just some of the rich and resonant perspective that are reopening film and literary history in this century.<sup>71</sup>

Eventually, he proclaims, interdisciplinary should be an important element in the study of adaptation: “Both film and literature can be regarded as businesses and industries that participate in technological constraints and advantages. Both enlist or engage dominant figures of gender, race, and class.”<sup>72</sup>

Film adaptation, like an alien among the natives, seems to gradually become domesticated, as mirrored in a number of recent adaptation studies. From a state of thralldom, adaptation is being elevated into a privileged position of self-affirmation. Its relationship to literature is neither denied nor overestimated anymore. Suggestions of broader context while

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<sup>70</sup> T. Corrigan, *Film and Literature: an Introduction and Reader* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1999) 2.

<sup>71</sup> Corrigan, 3.

<sup>72</sup> Corrigan, 8.

viewing adaptation became prevalent in the field of adaptation studies. Nevertheless, it will take some time until the old-fashioned approaches of wouldbe film critics viewing film adaptations as inferior (still present in numerous film reviews) will vanish definitely, and most of all, until the general expectations of a movie viewer will cease to be of what Wagner calls mere transposition.

### **3.1 Adaptation in Practice**

Alexander Jackiewicz, a Polish film critic, chose as the title of his collection of commentaries about film adaptations of literary pieces *Dangerous Liaisons of Literature and Film*.<sup>73</sup> Endangered seems to be film in particular since a bad adaptation can not harm literature and a good one can only give it a helping hand. A bad film adaptation will be repudiated by the conventional “the book was better” phrase and thus disaffiliated from literature and dismissed completely. A good film adaptation, on the contrary, will be held as a “co-belligerent” in the fight for understanding and appreciation. A good film adaptation is generally viewed as bringing new perspectives, new ways of interpretation and elucidation, and new observations. Not many spectators are actually aware of the fact that the broadening of perspectives is at the very same moment a limitation - what they are offered is another reader’s reading of the book: the director’s/screenwriter’s etc. Marie Mravcová sees the danger of film adapting in the phase of interpretation or rather in the lack of this phase.<sup>74</sup> According to her, initial interpretation, i.e. appreciation of the basic themes, motifs and messages, and subsequent realization of what it is the adaptators want to convey to the present day spectator is a crucial procedure, perquisite for any successful adaptation.

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<sup>73</sup> The original title is *Niebezpieczne związky literatury I filmu*, published in Warszawa in 1971.

<sup>74</sup> M. Mravcová, *Literatura ve filmu* (Praha: Melantrich, 1990) 8.

Spike Jonze's film called *Adaptation*<sup>75</sup> offers an interesting insight into the problematic of adaptation. Charlie Kaufman and his twin brother Donald are both screenwriters.<sup>76</sup> Charlie is an example of an ingenious, rational, introvert artist unable to descend from his inner world into the clichés of the reality around him. Donald serves as a complete opposite of Charlie: shallow, irrational, extrovert, naively open as a child, fitting into and coinciding with the surroundings. Susan Orlean is an author of a book about orchid hunting, in particular about an orchid hunter Laroche. The conciseness of characterizations from the movie trailer presents an original depiction of the characters:

CHARLIE: He writes the way he lives - with great difficulty.

DONALD: He lives the way he writes - with foolish abandon.

SUSAN: She writes about life but cannot live it.

LAROCHE: John's life is a book waiting to be adapted.

The movie begins and ends with an inner monologue from Charlie, a technique completely condemned by an adaptation "expert" Dr. McKee, who serves as an example of a despicable, impertinent, pretentious figure, ready to provide all the screenwriter wannabes with trivial solutions for their "crucial" problems, a figure slowly transforming into a friendly mentor helping Charlie to find the right approach to his adaptation. Charlie continually struggles with the beginning of the movie ("to begin...how do I start? I am hungry, I should get a coffee...I need to establish the themes... the banana with nuts, that's a good muffin"<sup>77</sup>) only to receive the piece of advice from McKee that the most important thing is the end. Charlie condemns his brother (criticizes his effort to become a screenwriter, his usage of film

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<sup>75</sup> USA, 2002.

<sup>76</sup> The real screenwriter of the movie *Adaptation* is Charlie Kaufman who decided to make a fictional character of himself. An interesting detail is that there is a Donald Kaufman as the second screenwriter but Charlie does not have a brother in reality. Could it be that his reality-fiction-hide-and-seek-game exceeded the boundaries of the movie? In any case, according to wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald\\_Kaufman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Kaufman), Donald Kaufman is the first fictional character nominated for an Academy Award.

<sup>77</sup> *Adaptation*, prod. Jonathan Demme/Vincent Landay/Edward Saxon, dir. Spike Jonze, 2002, 5 min. 16 sec.

clichés in his script, even his pronunciation) only to realize later on that his brother's approach not only to adaptation but to life as well may be much more productive than his.

Another interesting detail in this movie is the number of possible interpretations of the term adaptation and their consequent consonance. The most obvious is the main story about actual literary adaptation – Charlie adapting a book into a movie. Another type of adaptation is the adaptation in the biological sense – Darwin's evolution on the basis of adaptation is mentioned couple of times (a montage, a short depiction of adaptation is shown)<sup>78</sup>; plants are adapting to the environment in which they grow (orchids growing on trees in swamps). And finally, adaptation in the metaphorical sense – Charlie is adapting to the personality of his brother (his way of adapting to this world approximates his brother's; reconciliation by the trunk of a tree), Susan is adapting to a recently awakened passion (romantic relationship with Laroche), Charlie's script adapts to the needs of the contemporary world (reality-show like story is incorporated into the script) and also the movie itself seems to adapt to the newly discovered style of living of the protagonist (the first half seems to be like a typical Charlie's script – nothing happens, the spectator follows the semi-deep thoughts and worries of Charlie; the second one like Donald's – cliché elements of a bad movie: sex, car chases, guns, drugs, swamps, alligators, stupid “fun” song).

This movie is not a philosophical study theorizing about general features of adaptation but rather an adaptation in practice. Susan Orlean really wrote a book called *The Orchid Thief* and Charlie Kaufman really adapted it into a movie called *Adaptation*.<sup>79</sup> Orlean's book is presented as a difficult book to be adapted because there is no story. Charlie pronounces one of the utter fears of all screenwriters while privately talking to Susan: “I think I will

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<sup>78</sup> At the end of this montage a child is born – an entertaining moment as the whole montage follows Charlie's question “How did I get here?” – “here” meaning to the film studio.

<sup>79</sup> The movie was nominated for Academy Award in the category “adapted screenplay” which was perceived by some as a disappointment as they felt that the right category is the “original screenplay.”

disappoint you. You have written such a beautiful book.”<sup>80</sup> Following Susan’s advice - pick one thing you care about passionately; McKee’s advice – find an end, characters must change and the change must come from them; and his brother’s way of perceiving life, Charlie is able to combine all the different approaches and succeeds: Driving in a car, the main uroboros-like character Charlie is happy, contemplating (the repudiated technique of inner monologue is used by Charlie nevertheless because he likes it) his finished script, and a woman he was able to express his feelings to. The final shot depicts flowers growing in high speed with a city at the back and a “fun” song in the background. By descending to the level of Hollywood screenwriters’ techniques, strategies and rules, Charlie realizes that it is not possible to simply put a book on a screen but that it needs to be seen from various perspectives first, then interpreted and then put into the context of the new media (film). What is beautiful in a book does not have to necessarily be beautiful on the screen and vice versa. A screenwriter has to give up a substantial amount of beauty in order to gain beauty of a different kind.

### **3.2 Adaptation as Translation**

In semiotics, signs are perceived as being of dualistic nature: the signifier is represented by a word or phrase uttered, the signified stands for a mental concept.<sup>81</sup> In language, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. Except for onomatopoeic words, there is no logical explanation of why a book is called book and not a tree. An obvious proof of the arbitrariness is that in different languages objects are called differently.<sup>82</sup> In film, the signifier and the signified are almost identical.<sup>83</sup> Whereas different systems of signifiers

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<sup>80</sup> *Adaptation*, 68 min 13 sec.

<sup>81</sup> “znak,” *Slovník lingvistických termínů pro filology*, 2000 ed.

<sup>82</sup> The existence of a common protolanguage and the proximity of the territories of various nations resulted, of course, in many similarities.

<sup>83</sup> James Monaco, *Jak číst film* (Praha: Albatros, 2004) 154.

disable communication between speakers of different languages, film “language” overcomes this problem by using signifiers generally comprehensible to everyone.

In semiotics, film is depicted as an audiovisual system. In semiology, film adaptation or transformation of a literary piece into a film piece, is depicted as intersemiological translation. It is a translation of meanings (not signs/words) represented by signs of one semantic system into signs of another system. The whole process is based on two principles: 1. selection of adequate signs 2. combination of signs/structuring.<sup>84</sup> Reading a passage in a book and watching the same passage on a screen requires two different approaches from the reader/spectator. During the first one, a reader is offered conventional signs that stand for general ideas of objects/subjects. It is his prerogative to establish concrete depictions of those objects/subjects in his head. Outlines of these inner worlds of the readers’ heads will be the same, providing that they come from a similar cultural background, but the “shading” will differ considerably. A film spectator will be, on the contrary, shown an implementation of someone’s inner establishment extracted. This concretization epitomizes one of the basic aspects and at the same time one of the major problems of film adapting – it causes shifts of meaning, reduction of the magnitude of the meaning layers, suppression or even disownment of interpretative space etc.<sup>85</sup> James Monaco examines yet another aspect of the concretization which leads him to a different conclusion. He points out that it would be absurd for an author to try to describe a scene as exhaustively as it is shown in a movie (even though experimental novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet are striving to do exactly that). What a novel-writer does is singleing out those details that he considers important based on his personal approach to language, his point of view, habits and superstitions. In a movie, the spectator partly takes over this task when preferring one detail over another one and therefore acts more freely in a way. Nevertheless, in my view, firstly the autocracy of the director who decides what will be

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<sup>84</sup> Monaco, 10.

<sup>85</sup> Monaco, 10.

in a take (even though he cannot be in control of all the details) very much overshadows the freedom of a spectator to concentrate on a detail, and secondly the pace of a movie does not allow any profound evasiveness on the side of the spectator and thus the autocracy of the director is affirmed yet again by the spectator's obedient following of the main story line.<sup>86</sup>

### **3.3 Denotation and Connotation in Film**

Film as a medium is substantially denotational. As trivial as it sounds, the objects one sees represent primarily objects one sees. A book stands primarily for a book, not for wisdom, a cross for a cross, not for religion and so forth. This denotational power, nevertheless, brings along connotations as well. According to Monaco, there are two types of film connotations. The first one stems from its denotational power: film medium is able to incorporate all the connotational patterns present in different medias (for example equivocal phrases - spoken language, subtitles - written language, Mona Lisa - painting, national anthem - music etc.). The second one is specific for film and it has two subtypes. Paradigmatic connotation originates in a situation when a spectator, sometimes unconsciously, compares what he sees with what he could be seeing. An object/subject is presented in a certain way: Charlie Kaufman from the movie *Adaptation* is shown from a close range – drops of sweat on his face, nervous facial expression, receding hair-line. All these elements build up a picture of an overall insecure man. If Charlie was shown from a distance like he is in the following takes, the spectator would not be able to notice the nervousness. Syntagmatic connotation ensues from a comparison of two or more consecutive takes. For instance, when Charlie is leaving a studio where his movie is being shot but no one seems to notice him, he poses himself a question: How did I get there? A high speed pictorial narration of evolution concluded with a

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<sup>86</sup> An example of the “indiscipline” on the side of the spectator is shown for example on the webpage <http://www.moviemistakes.com> or <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpp0sONigrw> dealing with mistakes in movies – something that escaped the attention of the movie staff and was hoped to stay unnoticed by the spectators as well.

birth of a child is offered both to Charlie and to the spectator as a possible answer. This answer thus takes effect retrospectively: it splits the original meaning into an abstract and concrete level and thus offers number of possible interpretations. The syntagmatic aspect of film, in other words film editing (one of the Academy Awards category), is often considered the most typical category for film as a medium.<sup>87</sup>

For a more specific classification of connotations and denotations in film, Peter Wollen<sup>88</sup> uses C. S. Pierce's trichotomy when he distinguishes between three types of cinematic signs:

1. icon: a sign in which the signifier represents the signified on the basis of similarity and likeness
2. index: measures a quality because of an inherent relationship to it, rather than identity to it; the relation to the object is crucial (a frequent example: smoke coming from a house is an index of fire)
3. symbol: an arbitrary, conventional sign (with neither a direct nor an indexical relationship between the signifier and the signified)

Many public/street/traffic signs are icons: a picture of a fork stands for a refreshment point for instance. Another example is a computer icon, the fundamental communication element in the world of computers. In the second category, Wollen distinguishes between two types of indexes: 1. technical (medical symptoms as indexes of health, clocks and sundials as indexes of time) 2. metaphorical (a rolling gait as an index of sailors). An obvious example of the third category is a word.

On the basis of what has been conveyed about film so far, the iconic factor seems to be prevalent for this medium: the majority of objects stand for themselves - represent objects in reality. For literature, on the contrary, the symbolic factor is the dominant one: a book cannot

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<sup>87</sup> Monaco, 159.

<sup>88</sup> Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1969).



be read unless the reader agrees to the conventional relationship between signs and meanings. Between these two poles, the category of index is situated, evasive and difficult to describe, halfway between the abstract and the concrete, between connotation and denotation:

The icon is the short-circuit sign that is so characteristic of cinema; the symbol is the arbitrary or conventional sign that is the basis of spoken and written language. It is the second category – the index – that is most intriguing in Pierce’s and Wollen’s system: it seems to be a third means, halfway between the cinematic icon and the literary symbol, by which cinema can convey meaning. It is not an arbitrary sign, but neither is it identical. It suggests a third type of denotation that points directly toward connotation, and may in fact not be understandable without the dimension of connotation.<sup>89</sup>

Monaco explains the usage of index in film with a simple example: When we need to convey an abstract idea of heat in a movie we can do so by means of an image of a thermometer – an obvious index of temperature – or by more sophisticated indexes such as sweat, shimmering atmospheric waves or hot colors. Literature seems to be an art of telling, film an art of showing. Since it is easier to describe an abstract idea with words than actually show it, film derives benefit from an extensive use of indexes in order to express connotative meanings and thus depict abstract ideas. Monaco further borrows a number of literary terms and applies them to film: metonymy, synecdoche and tropes as means of depicting connotations. He concludes with an observation that film is much less denotative than generally thought. He claims: “But very few films are strictly denotative; they can’t help but be connotative.” Steady metonymies and synecdoches, such as falling calendar pages or close shots of marching feet representing an army, together with fresh ones create a depiction abundant in meaning:

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<sup>89</sup> Monaco, 166.

Indeed, because metonymical devices yield themselves so well to cinematic exploitation, cinema can be more efficient in this regard than literature can. Associated details can be compressed within the limits of the frame to present a statement of extraordinary richness. Metonymy is a kind of cinematic shorthand.<sup>90</sup>

Such is the paradox of film. This apparently denotative medium offers a vast range of connotative meanings. Furthermore, it is generally the connotative element that is most appreciated by the sensitive spectators – not what they see, but what they do not see, what they have to make up. Obstinate detractors of film as such, accusing it of being “all too evident”<sup>91</sup> should realize that the contrary is true. Because of the specific feasibilities of a film medium, much “thicker” meanings are offered to the spectator at once. The frame functions as a balloon. It can be shown empty or at the verge of burst. It takes some time for a reader to read a metonymic passage in a book, it can take just about a second to view the same “idea” on a screen. Film takes over some of the literary features and transforms them into its own “language.” This transformation does not deplete them of any depth or beauty, quite on the contrary, it transfers them into a different environment and thus opens them anew for the spectator.

Film and literature are two different media with specific features and operational rules. The crucial task of every “adaptor” should be to respect and gain from the divergence, transform and transfer, and minimize the amount of what is destined to be “lost in translation”. The easiest things to translate are established cultural meanings and values; especially myths such as the love of Romeo and Juliet, the fruitless effort of Don Quijote, David and Goliath, fathers and sons, the immortal longings of mortals, human destiny as perpetual quest, the mystery of death and so on.<sup>92</sup> Apart from these traditional symbols and metaphors, an adaptor is turned adrift to the complexities and singularities, heavy strokes and

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<sup>90</sup> Monaco, 168.

<sup>91</sup> Monaco, 168.

<sup>92</sup> Monaco, 11.

venial nuances and various peculiarities and maliciousnesses of semiological translation. Adaptation is always a challenge.

#### **4 Interpretation**

Equipped with some theory I can now proceed to a practical example of adaptation and approach it from the side of of the reader/spectator. The attention will be drawn to Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* and its two adaptations. Firstly, a literary adaptation of Michael Cunningham in his *The Hours*, secondly, a film adaptation of Stephen Daldry's *The Hours*. It is my aim to explore the various techniques used for a transposition of a literary text either to the same or to a different medium, and how the text itself is affected by it. For the purpose of brevity I shall concentrate on one theme only – time – and follow it as it is permeating through, transforming and being modulated in Woolf and Cunningham's novels and Daldry's film.

#### 4.1 Virginia Woolf and Her Time



By the time Woolf was working on her novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (or *The Hours* as was the working title) new psychological and philosophic approaches were gaining its prominence. Oppositions such as subjectivity/objectivity, rationality/irrationality, internal/external and private/public were among the most disputed ones and thus emblemized a new epoch of the history of aesthetics and arts called modernism. Among the most progressive ideas in psychology was one claiming that the human personality was not one given “fixed monolithic entity, but rather a shifting conglomerate of impressions and emotions”,<sup>94</sup> a continuous flow or a succession of stages, each of which presaged the following and encompassed the previous one. Strict distinctions between past, present and future events were substituted by the idea of continuum in which bits and pieces touch, pierce and mingle.

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<sup>93</sup> *Persistence of Mind* by Salvador Dalí – the hallmark running watch as an image of Bergsonian fluidity of time and at the same time as an attack at Newtonian mechanical time

<sup>94</sup> Elaine Showalter, *Introduction* in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (London: Penguin Books, 2000) XVIII.

In his *Modernist*<sup>95</sup> Martin Hilský quotes Stephen Kern when he says that the biggest events in the history of time are: the invention of the mechanical clock in the fourteenth century and the setting of standard time at the end of nineteenth century. Hilský further uses an example of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* to demonstrate the consequent totality of time established by measurability and controllability: the protagonist is not as much shocked by his sudden transformation into a beetle like creature but rather by the sight at his watch because it makes him realize that he will be late for work. A logical reaction to the dominion of time over man was an effort to subvert it; provided that its positive elements (such as organizational and practical advantages) can be preserved. That was a point at which private time was given priority over public time, or subjective over objective time. The moment, when philosophers such as Henry Bergson started to perceive time not as a physical entity divisible into units but as a fluidity, always flowing, always changing, always dependent on the perception of a subject.

Virginia Woolf was coping with time in an idiosyncratic way. She perceived it as frantically running like a film; she wanted to stop it by pinning it down with her pen point.<sup>96</sup> The core of most of her novels (starting with *Jacob's Room*) is a constant game with time. She is slowing it down, speeding it up, stretching it in and out, encouraging and suppressing it. This obsession with manipulation might be explained by her inability to control time in the real life: "At my age life I may say melts in the hand...I sit down, just arrange my thoughts, peep out of the window, turn over a page, and its bedtime!"<sup>97</sup> writes Woolf in her letter to Carrington, or: "I mean, life has to be sloughed: has to be faced: to be rejected; then accepted on new terms with rapture. And so on, and so on; till you are 40, when the only problem is

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<sup>95</sup> Martin Hilský, *Modernist* (Praha: Torst, 1995).

<sup>96</sup> Hilský, 18.

<sup>97</sup> Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1997) 457.

how to grasp it tighter and tighter to you, so quick it seems to slip, and so infinitely desirable is it.” in her letter to Gerald Brenan.<sup>98</sup>

#### 4.1.1 Mrs. Dalloway and The Hours: The Struggle

Virginia Woolf was working on her novel *The Hours/Mrs. Dalloway* for almost two years - from October 1922 till October 1924. As her diary entries show she was a time planner, carefully jotting down an approximate time span of her writings. Nevertheless, she was heavily dependent on the condition of her health and thus her plans had to be altered several times because of her inability to write. For Woolf, *The Hours/Mrs. Dalloway* seems to have been especially wearisome but at the very same moment immensely fascinating. Woolf is writing furiously at one moment, putting the story aside the next, then hesitating whether she will ever come back to it, only to plunge into a new wave of ravishment. Her ambiguous feelings are traceable in her *Diaries*:

I foresee, to return to *The Hours*, that this is going to be the devil of a struggle. The design is so queer and so masterful. I'm always having to wrench my substance to fit it. The design is certainly original, and interests me hugely. I should like to write away and away at it, very quick and fierce. (19 June 1923)<sup>99</sup>

Or later:

I've been battling for ever so long with 'The Hours', which is proving one of my most tantalising and refractory of books. Parts are so bad, parts so good; I'm much

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<sup>98</sup> Nigel Nicolson, *The Question of Things Happening. The Letters of Virginia Woolf* (London: The Hogarth, 1996) 598-599.

<sup>99</sup> Anne Olivier Bell, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf. Volume II: 1920-1924* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1995) 249.

interested; can't stop making it up yet – yet. What is the matter with it? (29 August 193)<sup>100</sup>

While writing *The Hours*, not only did she realize the inexorableness of the hours (she turned 40 in 1922), but also the incredible difficulty of expressing these hours in words. The idea of throwing the novel into the fire should it bore her was soothing, but not soothing enough to overcome her fear of failure as an author and consequently as a human being. She had high expectations for *The Hours*, she wanted to “forsee this book better than the others and get the utmost out of it”<sup>101</sup>, try out her experimental methods and prove herself right in her literary battle against Wells, Bennet and alike, and thus let the nation, not the learned in literature, decide about the lifetimes of her characters.

#### 4.1.2 The Beginning

Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the gloves herself. **Big Ben was striking** as she stepped out into the street. It was **eleven o'clock** and **the unused hour** was fresh as if issued to children on a beach. But there was something solemn in the deliberate swing of **the repeated strokes**; something stirring in the murmur of wheels and the shuffle of footsteps.<sup>102</sup>

Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself. For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges; Rumpelmayer's men were coming.

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<sup>100</sup> Bell, 262.

<sup>101</sup> Bell, 209.

<sup>102</sup> Stella McNichol, *Mrs. Dalloway's Party* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1973) 19. (bold letters and underlining added by me)

And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning - fresh as if issued to children on a beach.<sup>103</sup>

The first excerpt comes from the beginning of a short story “Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street” which was intended to be the first chapter of *The Hours/Mrs. Dalloway*. The second one is the actual beginning of *Mrs. Dalloway*. The first sentence remained the same except for the object of buying. Seemingly a petty detail, nevertheless, considering for instance the flowery imagery of the novel and its consequent meanings, this “petty” detail enriches the whole story considerably since the whole novel is based on such modernist juxtaposition of petty details and grand themes. As Woolf writes in her essay on *Ulysses*: “restless scintillations, in its irrelevance, its flashes of deep significance succeeded by incoherent inanities, seems to be life itself”.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, the significance of the first sentence only reassures one that it *is* important *what* Mrs. Dalloway went to buy on that beautiful June morning.

In the short story, the hours appear quite early – in the second sentence. Physical hours are concerned – Big Ben – and they are not only present, they are “present loudly” (its striking is mentioned twice within three sentences). In the novel, Woolf decided for a more sophisticated hours to be pushed forward and thus before the reader “hears” striking of Big Ben, s/he is shifted back in time into Mrs. Dalloway’s past. Once again, a small detail of one memory wedging into the present moment unobtrusively but urgently is essential in the sense of adumbrating the overall structure of the novel.

The phrase “the unused hour” is yet another detail that contributes to the overall picture of Virginia Woolf’s perception of time. It leads one to the fact that Woolf might be on the one hand very futuristic in her conception of time and on the other hand bound to

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<sup>103</sup> Virginia Woolf: *Mrs. Dalloway* (London: Penguin Books, 2000) 3.

<sup>104</sup> Virginia Woolf, “Modern Novels” in Andrew McNellie, *The Essays of Virginia Woolf* (London: Hogarth Press, 1986-88) Vol. 3, 34.



tradition, the Protestant tradition to be precise. Max Weber discusses in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*<sup>105</sup> the Puritan point of view on wealth and its acquisition. Surprisingly, the crucial objection is not towards wealth itself but rather towards the consequences of possessing large fortune:

The real moral objection is to relaxation in the security of possession, the enjoyment of wealth with the consequence idleness and the temptations of the flesh, above all of distraction from the pursuit of a righteous life. In fact, it is only because possession involves this danger of relaxation that it is objectionable at all.<sup>106</sup>

Relaxation is perceived as waste of time. Waste of time is assessed as the deadliest of sins in principle:

The span of human life is infinitely short and precious to make sure of one's own election. Loss of time through sociability, idle talk, luxury, "even more sleep than is necessary for health, six to at most eight hours", is worthy of absolute moral condemnation. It does not yet hold, with Franklin, that time is money, but the proposition is true in a certain spiritual sense. It is infinitely valuable because every hour lost is lost to labour for the glory of God.<sup>107</sup>

One could go as far as to imagine Woolf's conviction of her ability to write being a calling which she should profess and in which she should labor. Any lost minute is a manifestation of ingratitude for what she has been given. Having a room and a talent at her

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<sup>105</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 13 Apr. 2007  
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/WEBER/WeberCH5.html>

<sup>106</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 13 Apr. 2007  
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/WEBER/WeberCH5.html>

<sup>107</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 13 Apr. 2007  
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/WEBER/WeberCH5.html> (the quote within the quote from Richard Baxter)

disposal, it was her obligation to use every hour and write. Nevertheless, it is essential to bear in mind that in Woolf's time, the traditional understanding of time as presented by the protestant ethic was slowly losing its hegemony. The linear time symbolized by the chiming of Big Ben and understood as an obligation on the side of the individual to make the best of it, i.e. to infill it with useful action, loses its traditional value and becomes rather a sequence of empty moments which needs to be used "somehow". In other words, the generally approved social meaning of time gradually disappears. As a consequence of this process, Woolf's work could be understood as a suggestion of new understandings of the meaning of time. Instead of general establishment, individual consciousness and relationships towards time-space are placed emphasis upon.

According to Martin Hilský, there are two modes of manipulation of time in Woolf's prose. Either the consciousness of a person is fixated into one spot and the reality/space is whirling around it (for example consciousness located between the leaves of grass monitoring the course of events in a camera-like manner in "Kew Gardens") or the reality/space is fixed and the consciousness circulates around it like on a leash (for example consciousness attracted to a spot on a wall, always coming back to it with a new explanation of its existence in "The Mark on the Wall"). In *Mrs. Dalloway* both approaches are mixed. The first one in Clarissa's morning stroll through the pulsating, thick-with-life-like London, the second one in the aeroplane scene, in which the plane draws the attention to itself and thus unites, in a way, the characters' thoughts – it literally heaves their heads and makes them watch itself. David Daiches pertinently characterized this technique in his *The Novel and the Modern World* in the terms of two dimensions: time and space. Either we stop in time and observe events of various qualities in the space around us or we get into the space of consciousness of one of the characters and move backwards and forwards in time. The notion of the space of reality and

the space of consciousness and the time of reality and the time of consciousness leads one to the antipodal categories of the exterior and the interior.

The exterior loses its hegemony in *Mrs. Dalloway*. The exterior events, which could be depicted as plot, are minimized – except the fact that Mrs. Dalloway is preparing and then throwing a party, there is basically no plot at all. Moreover, the exterior events do not actually represent what one might sum up as “what the book is really about”. When Laura is describing *Mrs. Dalloway* to her neighbour in the film *The Hours*, she combines exterior with interior elements, emphasizing the latter: “Oh, it’s about this woman who’s incredibly - well, she’s a hostess and she’s incredibly confident and she’s going to give a party. And, maybe because she’s confident, everyone thinks she’s fine... but she isn’t.” Just as the behavior of Mrs. Dalloway at the party (the exterior) serve as a departure point for Laura to understand her (Mrs. Dalloway’s) inner self (the interior), the other minor details (exterior events) are engaged as gate openers of the path to the individual characters’ consciousness throughout the novel. The choice of words “gate” and “path” is not accidental. Erich Auerbach already pointed out the disparity of the proportions of the exterior and the interior in Virginia Woolf’s prose: “...in a surprising fashion unknown to earlier periods, a sharp contrast results between the brief span of time occupied by the exterior event and the dreamlike wealth of a process of consciousness which traverses a whole subjective universe.”<sup>108</sup>

In the excerpt from the beginning of this chapter it is literally a gate that leads the reader from the exterior reality into the interior world of Clarissa’s thoughts and memories. A detail of a door mentioned in the third sentence, the hinges, reappears a number of sentences after, this time as part of a door in the past, thus elegantly connecting the present and the past, the exterior and the interior: “The doors would be taken off their hinges... For so it had

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<sup>108</sup> Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) 538.

always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air.“ The text reads fluently, the time strata are almost imperceptible:

Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself. For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges; Rumpelmayer’s men were coming.  
And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning - fresh as if issued to children on a beach.

What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen; looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks rising, falling; standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, “Musing among the vegetables?”—was that it?—“I prefer men to cauliflowers”—was that it? He must have said it at breakfast one morning when she had gone out on to the terrace—Peter Walsh. He would be back from India one of these days, June or July, she forgot which, for his letters were awfully dull; it was his sayings one remembered; his eyes, his pocket-knife, his smile, his grumpiness and, when millions of things had utterly vanished—how strange it was!—a few sayings like this about cabbages.<sup>109</sup>

The contrast between exterior and interior time is also apparent in the grammatical structure of the text. In contrast to the conventional narrative clearly distinguishing between

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<sup>109</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (London: Penguin Books, 2000) 3. The underlined text is, more or less, the present, the rest is, more or less, the past.

direct and reported speech, present and past narrative etc., the readers of Virginia Woolf are condemned to using such an unreliable gauge as the sentence length. Interior experience is usually described in the longest sentences, exterior narrative in the short ones. The sentence-structure of the interior experience seems to imitate the darting, bit-by-bit, loosely connected flow of thought and emotion.<sup>110</sup> It is often digressing, transiting and meandering. One thought is interrupted or blocked only to be substituted by another one that dissolves in vagueness. Detours, contradictions and omissions are constantly present. Exterior narrative, on the contrary, is usually quite straightforward and comprehensible. A part of Woolf's strategy to "fool" the reader is her excessive use of present participles<sup>111</sup> which contributes to the overall feeling of continuum – despite the shifts from present into the past, the grammatical element of present included in the present continuous in the past serves as a uniting element.

#### 4.1.3 The End

*"One day can make your life. One day can ruin your life. All life is four or five big days that change everything."*  
(Beverly Donofrio, *Riding in Cars with Boys*)

The novel ends with a party, the party does not end with the end of the novel as the existence of short stories such as *The Man Who Loved His Kind*, *The Introduction*, *The Ancestors*, *Together and Apart*, *The New Dress* or *A Summing Up* shows. Woolf seems to be unreconciled with the end of *The Hours*/the hours, with the "death" of her story and characters and therefore resuscitate them several times. There is no real ending as there is no proper beginning:

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<sup>110</sup> Nicholas Marsh, *Virginia Woolf. The Novels* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998) 6.

<sup>111</sup> Present participles highlighted in the text.

“I will come,” said Peter, but he sat on for a moment. What is this terror? what is this ecstasy? he thought to himself. What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement?

It is Clarissa, he said.

For there she was.<sup>112</sup>

The last section of the novel starts with Peter’s question: “But where is Clarissa?” Mrs. Dalloway has just learned about “death coming to her party” in the form of a piece of information of Septimus’s death provided by Sir William, and decided to withdraw into a little room and meditate about herself, Septimus, death, party, life...and how everything is connected like a spiderweb. Mrs. Dalloway is absent at the crucial moment of the reunion of old friends: Sally, Peter and herself. After posing a question, Peter and Sally instigate a conversation – a mixture of past, present and future - wondering how much time changed all of them (Sally became Lady Rosseter, Peter moved his life into India, Clarissa become Mrs. Dalloway), wondering how little time changed them (Sally “still attractive, still a personage”<sup>113</sup>, Peter still fiddling with his pocket knife, still in love – but with whom?, Clarissa still a bit hide-bound, still the perfect hostess), wondering about Elizabeth and how different she is from Clarissa, even though she is a descendant of hers. When Sally decides to go and talk to Richard Dalloway, Peter remains sitting and contemplates his momentary feelings which, as he is expressing them, seem to gain an eternal resonance. The last sentence could be read as a concrete answer to his prior question “Where is Clarissa?” but it, of course, gets a metaphorical spin. Clarissa is there. At the party. Constantly present, even though one cannot physically see her. As well as being constantly present during the whole novel for the reader, she is also constantly present in Peter’s life. Their love story, apparently buried in the past, in reality never ended. Peter never got over Clarissa’s refusal, Clarissa remembers with

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<sup>112</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (London: Penguin Books, 2000) 213.

<sup>113</sup> Woolf, 206.

nostalgia that those moments in the summer, 34 years ago, were the happiest moments of her life.

These moments, or “moments of being” as Woolf called them, these fleeting moments of joy, which effect the most enduring impressions throughout the life are gone. They can only be brought back to life in the form of memories but not lived through in reality. Clarissa just turned 52 and feels like everything is over for her: “...and then, next moment, it was as if the five acts of a play that had been very exciting and moving were now over and she had lived a lifetime in them and had run away, had lived with Peter, and it was now over.”<sup>114</sup> This one day in her life serves like summing up: the time length of 52 years seem to be compressed into approximately 24 hours.

There are three time strata in this summing up. The first one is the point of departure, Wednesday, 13 June 1923, the second one is another June day in 1889, when Clarissa was 18 years old, the third one is Clarissa’s future into which she decides to step out after her meditation on death in the little room hidden from the party. On the one hand, Clarissa seems to enjoy the present to the full, plunge into it completely, perceive it intensely: “what she loved was this, here, now, in front of her”.<sup>115</sup> On the other hand, all the moments of exquisiteness, freshness and happiness are irrevocably attached to the past: Sally Seton’s kiss, “the most exquisite moment of her whole life”,<sup>116</sup> the final scene with Richard at three o’clock in the afternoon of a very hot day etc. Peter Walsh claims that women live much more in the past than men do: “They attach themselves to places; their fathers – a woman’s always proud of her father.”<sup>117</sup> It is rather ironic, that it is himself not Clarissa who cannot maintain his composure during their meeting after the years (he breaks into tears).

On the 30 August 1923 Virginia Woolf notes down the following into her diary:

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<sup>114</sup> Woolf, 51.

<sup>115</sup> Woolf, 9.

<sup>116</sup> Woolf, 38.

<sup>117</sup> Woolf, 60.

I have no time to describe my plans. I should say a good deal about *The Hours*, and my discovery: how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters: I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humor, depth. The idea is that the caves shall connect and each come to daylight at the present moment.<sup>118</sup>

And two months later: “It took me a year’s groping to discover what I call my tunnelling process, by which I tell the past by installments, as I have need of it. This is my prime discovery so far.”<sup>119</sup> By juxtaposition of past and present moments, Woolf was deliberately dislocating and disrupting the natural chronology; by putting bits and pieces into time-different contexts she was freeing them from their various earlier involvements, “emancipating them from their exterior temporal continuity as well as from the narrow meanings they seemed to have when they were bound to a particular present.”<sup>120</sup> The moments of happiness from the past, for instance, were not detected as happiness at that moment but are considered as happiness as a result of a comparison with a number of other moments many years after.

By juxtaposition of herself with the myriad of other women in the novel, Clarissa is trying to find her place on the time axis of a woman’s life. A life of a woman could be drawn by placing single female characters on a line: Elizabeth is just entering the state of womanhood (she is 18, just like Clarissa during the June 1889), Rezia Smith is in her 20s, Doris Killman is past 40, Clarissa and Sally are in their 50s, Millicent Burton is 62, Helena Parry is past 80 and finally the anonymous old woman that Clarissa sees from her window is very probably close to death. The female life cycle, something that could be called the biological clock today, is presented by the mosaic of these characters. Clarissa considers herself in the midpoint of her life. As mentioned before, she is feeling like past all the earthly

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<sup>118</sup> Anne Olivier Bell, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf. Volume II: 1920-1924* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1995) 263.

<sup>119</sup> Bell, 272.

<sup>120</sup> Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) 542.



pleasures, she fears the lapse of time: “But she feared time itself, and read on Lady Bruton’s face, as if it had been a dial cut in impassive stone, the dwindling of life; how year by year her share was sliced; how little the margin that remained was capable any longer of stretching, of absorbing, as in the youthful years<sup>121</sup> Clarissa is aware of the dissolving of her childbearing years, she continually contemplates mortality, aging, loss. Elaine Showalter quotes Woolf in her Introduction to *Mrs. Dalloway* and reveals that Clarissa was originally to kill herself or merely die at the end of the party<sup>122</sup>. Death, the end of human life, the end of everybody’s “hours” is fundamental enough to serve as the peak of the novel. Nevertheless, Clarissa does not die and still, the final party remains the peak of the novel. The crucial drama seems to lie in the juxtaposition of death and life rather than in death itself. Death would not be perceived as devastating and absolute if there was no substance to compare it with – life. The party is a place where past, present and future meet, where Clarissa meets Septimus (even though only virtually) and thus life meets death. The timing is crucial.

There is yet another character worth mentioning, a character who enables the right timing in the broadest sense of the word. It is the ultimate hours, the almighty London clock: Big Ben. Its insistent chiming keeps one aware of the passage of time, of the measuring out of human lives, the palpability of eventual death. The character of Big Ben seems to have an absolute power over the rest of the characters. Leaden circles dissolving in the air absorb human beings and let them see the ephemerality of time. Big Ben, audibly present throughout the whole novel, transforms the abstract idea of time into a concrete object. The chiming of Big Ben is present when Septimus decides not to face the hours anymore as well as when Clarissa makes the opposite decision. The perfect timing of Clarissa’s finding out about Septimus’s death might have caused her to lean back towards life, her determination to go on:

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<sup>121</sup> Woolf, 32.

<sup>122</sup> Elaine Showalter, *Introduction* in Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (London: Penguin Books, 2000) XXXVI.

back to the party to face the guests, back to her husband to face the present and back to Sally and Peter to face the past.

Clarissa seems to be calmed and reconciled after her little meditation, aware of the fact that death is not a threat but rather a natural close to life, of one's hours: "The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him, with all this going on. There! The old lady had put out her light! The whole house was dark now with this going on, she repeated, and then the words came to her, Fear no more the heat of the sun."<sup>123</sup> There is no reason to pity Septimus, Clarissa thinks, there is no reason to "fear the heat of the sun". The perception of death as something one does not need to fear reminds one of the Protestant tradition of seeing death as a gate to the next life and therefore not an absolute end but rather a way of fulfilment or completion. Anne Bradstreet writes in a poem dedicated to her father:

Oft spake of death, and with a smiling cheer  
He did exult his end was drawing near;  
Now fully ripe, as shock of wheat that's grown,  
Death as a sickle hath him timely mown,  
And in celestial barn hath housed him high,  
Where storms, nor show'rs, nor ought can damnify.<sup>124</sup>

While in the protestant tradition the completion is accomplished in the afterlife – the dead, thanks to his exemplary life, becomes part of the "celestial barn" in which he is protected against dilapidation – in Woolf's novel the climax is the death itself. Septimus decided to jump out of the window because it was his time to go. The old lady in the window across the street might be slowly preparing for her departure. Clarissa, on the contrary, knows

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<sup>123</sup> Woolf, 204.

<sup>124</sup> Anne Bradstreet, "To the Memory of My Dear and Ever Honored Father Thonas Dudley Esq. Who Deceased, July 31, 1653, and of His Age 77" In Nina Baym, et al., *The Norton Anthology. American Literature* (London and New York: W.W. Norton and Company Ltd., 1998) 260.

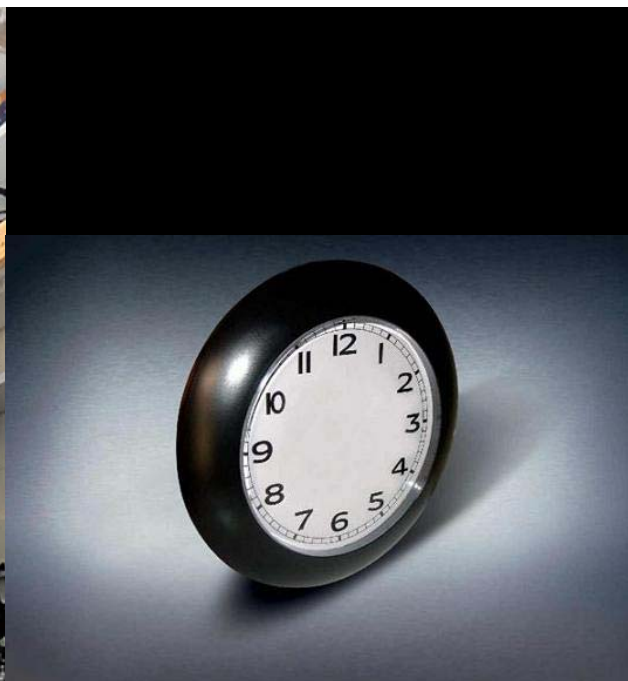
that her time has not yet been fulfilled. At the beginning of the novel Mrs. Dalloway decided to buy the flowers herself. At the end of it Mrs. Dalloway decides to face the hours.

“Big Ben was beginning to strike, first the warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable.”<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Woolf, 4.

## 4.2 Michael Cunningham and His Time



The twenty-first century, the century of technology, speed and world wide communication inundates the human beings with an unceasing amount of pieces of information, it stuffs them with answers to questions that they did not even think of asking: In *10,000 Answers: The Ultimate Trivia Encyclopedia* one can find out that a standard precooked weight of a McDonald's hamburger is 1.6 ounces or that the running time of the

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<sup>126</sup> Accuracy and evasiveness or various depictions of time in 21<sup>st</sup> century: 1st picture: "Holding a piece of time" from <http://www.netscape.com/tag/time>. 2nd picture: Radio clock, i.e. clock connected to a standard time such as an atomic clock. 3<sup>rd</sup> picture: atomic clock. 4<sup>th</sup> picture: "Silver Clock" from [http://lofi.forum.physorg.com/RELATIVITY+\\_13479.html](http://lofi.forum.physorg.com/RELATIVITY+_13479.html).

Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs tune “Stay”, the shortest tune ever to reach number one on the U.S. Billboard pop chart, was 1 minute 36 seconds.<sup>127</sup> Whereas some questions appear to magnetize ultimate answers, other seem to resist persistently, directing one towards epistemologic scepticism. Time has been discovered, discussed and examined approximately 2,500 thousand years ago. Nowadays, time is being described, defined, redefined, measured by the atomic clock, devided into timezones, “owned” by ordinary people in the form of radio/kitchen/car/computer clock and even degraded to a fashionable item (brand wrist-watch). And yet there is no generally agreed on definition of time.

Most of the philosophers of time assent to a general division of time into the present, past and future. Nevertheless, their approaches towards the ontological differences among those differ immensely. Bradley Dowden distinguishes between three competing theories:

Presentists argue that necessarily only present objects and present experiences are real; and we conscious beings recognize this in the special “vividness” of our present experience. According to the growing-universe theory, the past and present are both real, but the future is not. The third and more popular theory is that there are no significant ontological differences among present, past and future because the differences are merely subjective. This view is called “eternalism” or “the block universe theory”.<sup>128</sup>

Another insight into the mysteriousness of time is offered by Stephen Hawking’s popular science book *A Brief History of Time*:

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<sup>127</sup> Stanley Newman, Hal Fittipaldi, *10,000 Answers: The Ultimate Trivia Encyclopedia* (New York: Gramercy Books, 2001).

<sup>128</sup>Bradley Dowden, “Time,” *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 24 Apr. 2007  
<http://www.iep.utm.edu/t/time.htm>

Imaginary time is indistinguishable from directions in space. If one can go north, one can turn around and head south; equally, if one can go forward in imaginary time, one ought to be able to turn around and go backward. This means that there can be no important difference between the forward and backward directions of imaginary time. On the other hand, when one looks at “real time”, there’s a very big difference between the forward and backward directions, as we all know. Where does this difference between the past and the future come from? Why do we remember the past but not the future?<sup>129</sup>

Michael Cunningham might not have been familiar with the above mentioned texts yet a similar fascination with time is detectable in his work. In his book *The Hours* he parallels the act of writing a book with the act of throwing a party or making a cake – for him they are all creative acts and their creators are artists. Cunningham’s exploration of time can thus be compared with a scientific work or philosophical contemplation – all of those are venturesome, respectable and experimental – and classified as one of the major contributions to the quest of understanding time. Nevertheless, Cunningham owes many of his findings to his collaborator, Virginia Woolf, and to her essential theses which she presented in her *Mrs. Dalloway*.

#### 4.2.1 Cunningham’s *The Hours*: The Struggle with the Time Travel

Cunningham claims that he “wanted *The Hours* to be in the spirit of Virginia Woolf’s work without trying to imitate her voice”.<sup>130</sup> His method was to reread Woolf several times, then put the books aside, and not open them until his own book was finished. He started with

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<sup>129</sup> Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam Book, 1996) 151.

<sup>130</sup> Maeghan Chambers, “Michael Cunningham, Author of *The Hours* Discusses the Film,” *The Hoya*, 11 Mar. 2007 <http://www.thehoya.com/guide/011703/guide3.cfm>

taking the main character of Mrs. Dalloway, exempting it from its context and placing it into a new one. Mrs. Dalloway thereby manages to jump several decades ahead of her time in a time-travel-like manner. Cunningham's idea was to preserve the eternal nature of woman's destiny, the perpetuity of woman's actions and the fragility of the equilibrium of the inner and outer self so specific for the female species. Nonetheless, the outcome seemed to be flat and unsatisfactory. Cunningham decided to add a second time stratum: a modern version of the fictional character of Mrs. Dalloway was accompanied by the real character of her creator (thus becoming a fictional character as well). It was not until the third stratum was added that the real author, Michael Cunningham, was fully satisfied with his work. The presence of Laura Brown, a fragile woman connecting the unordinary (Woolf) with the ordinary (Mrs. Dalloway) by "reading" them both, provided the necessary wire-up substance, the across the centuries uniting element which gave the book its depth and vitality.

Three stories instead of one, three basic time strata multiplied by numerous flashbacks (plus three different futures) instead of two demanded much more planning, combining and accuracy. To avoid chaos and obscurity Cunningham divided *The Hours* into chapters bearing the characters' names ("Mrs. Dalloway", "Mrs. Brown", "Mrs. Woolf"). The structure is therefore much more visible, much more explicit. This explicitness is further detectable in the description of the milieu in which the characters live – the characters are very much of their time (in contrast with Woolf's vagueness in *Mrs. Dalloway*) This tendency to ground the characters somewhat firmly in their era is especially apparent in Clarissa Vaughan's story in which her friend Richard suffers from a modern version of the medieval killer diseases – AIDS, he is about to receive a literary prize that Ashbery, Merrill and Merwin received before him and Clarissa sees a movie star and is not quite sure whether it was Meryl Streep or Vanessa Redgrave ( both of which play the character of Mrs. Dalloway in a film – Streep in

The Hours, Redgrave in Mrs. Dalloway – Cunningham, of course, could not know about Streep’s part in the future movie).

Another kind of unneeded explicitness was represented by the too obvious stretches into the Woolfian world which Cunningham tried to get rid of. He describes his efforts as “loosening up”:

In an earlier draft of the book the parallels between *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours* were more exact. I looked at what I had there was something a little off about it. I went back and looked at *Mrs. Dalloway* again, and I remembered that part of what I loved about *Mrs. Dalloway* is its sort of looseness ... I tried harder to honor that book by loosening up my own book.<sup>131</sup>

In order to make his stories independent and eternal and not constrained by a specific time period or character/author, Cunningham had to find just the right distance from Woolf. Being too far would prevent him from gaining from Woolf’s immortal story - her ways of vision, her language competences or her games with time, being too close would doom him to be a mere imitator, devoid of any creativity of his own. Like a scientist in a chemical laboratory, Cunningham had to be extremely careful with his ingredients and immensely attentive with the timing of his chemical/literary reactions.

#### 4.2.2 The Beginning

The book *The Hours* begins with a Prologue in which Virginia Woolf’s suicide is depicted in an artistic, unexpectedly poetic way (Virginia’s body under the bridge, facing the

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<sup>131</sup> Maeghan Chambers, “Michael Cunningham, Author of *The Hours* Discusses the Film,” *The Hoya*, 11 Mar. 2007 <http://www.thehoya.com/guide/011703/guide3.cfm>



riverbottom, dreaming-like). It is the year 1941, the last day of Virginia Woolf's life, the moment when she decides to cease living – it is the the end which serves Michael Cunningham as a beginning. Due to its isolation from the rest of the book the Prologue gives one an impression of incoherence or unintelligibility at first sight. Nevertheless, as far as the overall structure of the book is concerned one realizes that the theme of death is very much like a dark thread going throughout the novel and winding round the characters and their lives and therefore omnipresent. Consequently, it is not accidental that the novel begins with death. Moreover, the overall equilibrium of the book is clearly visible when putting Virginia's and Richard's death side by side, one at the beginning, the other at the end – balancing each other out.

After the Prologue, the first chapter is “Mrs. Dalloway”, then follows the chapter “Mrs. Woolf”, then “Mrs. Brown” and then all the three alternate in a complicated manner: MD – MW – MB – MD – MW – MB MW – MD – MB – MW – MD – MB – MW – MD – MW – MD – MB – MD – MB – MW – MB – MD<sup>132</sup>. The regularity of succession gradually transforms into a random variations. There are eight chapters of Mrs. Dalloway, and seven, i.e. one less, of both Mrs. Woolf and Mrs. Brown. Notwithstanding, an equalization can be found here as well: Mrs. Brown literally enters the final Mrs. Dalloway chapter and thus gains half of this chapter, the Prologue could be understood as Mrs. Woolf's chapter – each of the characters is given approximately the same amount of time.

The first sentence of the first chapter “Mrs. Dalloway“ is: There are still the flowers to buy. The second chapter “Mrs. Woolf“ starts with: Mrs. Dalloway said something (what?) and got the flowers herself.<sup>133</sup> The third chapter, “Mrs. Brown” opens with Laura Brown reading Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*: Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers

<sup>132</sup> MD – Mrs. Dalloway, MB – Mrs. Brown, MW – Mrs. Woolf

<sup>133</sup> This chapter ends with the definite version of the opening of the novel: “Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.”

herself.<sup>134</sup> Three women of three different time periods are elegantly joined together by the idea of buying flowers (the importance of flower imagery in Woolf was mentioned earlier). This technique is employed several times throughout the book (the decision not to look into a mirror, a feeling of dislocation, the exquisite moments of kisses), it enables Cunningham to move in time, back and forth, and thus connect three single days in the lives of three different women: June 1923, June 1949 and June sometimes at the end of the twentieth century; and three different cities: London, Los Angeles and New York City. “A woman’s whole life in a single day. Just one day. And in that day her whole life.”<sup>135</sup> is tripled. The reader sees a woman, dissolved into three different stories, so different but nevertheless so essentially similar, interlocking and thus uniting, creating a compact portrait of a woman in general, an archetype of a woman spanning centuries.

Virginia, Laura and Clarissa (Vaughan) could be seen as merely relocated and in time transferred characters. Virginia is a special case: a real woman is transformed into a fictional character. She stays in her own time but is described in a contemporary language and from a contemporary perspective so that her story communicates directly with the contemporary reader. Clarissa is Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway relocated from the post-war London into the shortly before the end of the millenium New York City. The points of attachment between these two characters are uncountable: the name (Clarissa is dubbed Mrs. Dalloway by her friend Richard), the flowers (she starts her day with buying flowers), the party (she is throwing a party), the death (Richard commits suicide) etc. Nonetheless, the late twentieth century Clarissa is after all a little different from her Woolfian counterpart. Time does not constrain her as much as the real Mrs. Dalloway, quite on the contrary, it offers her enough freedom to have a well-respected job, to own her own apartment and to live with her female partner Sally in a marriage-like relationship. It is a paradox, therefore, that this particular

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<sup>134</sup> Michael Cunningham, *The Hours* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003).

<sup>135</sup> *The Hours*, prod. Scott Rudin/Robert Fox, dir. Stephen Daldry, 2002, 17 min. 20 sec.

freedom, the possibilities that it offers, are engaging her at the same time as they are liberating her. The society tolerating some until this time unthinkable behaviors sets them as standards and thus gives them a label of conformity. Clarissa thereby, an independent, successful woman, a lesbian living in a steady relationship, paying taxes and throwing parties becomes somewhat commonplace. Sally reminds one more of Richard Dalloway than Sally Seton. She is playing the role of a loving husband/wife rather than that of an extraordinary, daring, or even shocking, passionate lover. It might be Cunningham’s suggestion of what would happen if the most exquisite moment in Clarissa’s (Mrs. Dalloway’s) life would be granted a continuation. Laura could be seen as a female portrait of Septimus Smith: fragile, suicidal, closed in her private cell. They are both trying to fit into the newly restored picture of a happy society (after the First World War and the Second World War). Their partners are successful in the fitting process (Lucrezia is beautiful, young, full of life, Dan is a war hero, admired by others) thus contributing to their feeling of failure. The structure of the relationship between these two couples is surprisingly concurrent:

Septimus - Lucrezia: a war hero (kills himself) – a beautiful wife

Dan – Laura: a war hero – a beautiful wife (wants to kill herself)

Gender transformation serves Cunningham as an interesting structural device in general. The following table shows an overview of the major characters in both *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours* and also the major transformations of the characters (transformation of gender being only one of the techniques Cunningham uses while creating his own characters).

	<i>Mrs. Dalloway</i>	<i>The Hours</i>	Transformations
<b>Female characters</b>	Clarissa Dalloway	Clarissa Vaughan	Clarissa→Clarissa allowed to live life with the person who gave her the “most exquisite moment of her whole life”
	Sally Seton	Sally	Sally: a mixture of Sally Seton (the woman Clarissa falls passionately in love with) and Richard Dalloway (the one Clarissa marries)

<sup>136</sup> One of Virginia Woolf’s most famous essays was called “Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown.”

		Laura <sup>136</sup> Brown Virginia Woolf	Laura: a modified female version of Septimus Smith Virginia: a real author who became a fictional character
<b>Male characters</b>  137	Richard Dalloway  Peter Walsh  Septimus Smith	Richard Brown	Richard Brown: reminds one of Richard Dalloway in his dependence on Clarissa (Clarissa has been nursing him for years, thus living with him in a marriage-like relationship) – the dependence is mutual; Sally Seton in the exquisiteness of a kiss (romantic relationship with Clarissa that lasted one summer); Peter Walsh in the final refusal (a kiss on the corner of the street announces the end of their relationship); Septimus Smith in his suicide (as well as Virginia Woolf)

The main structural link is without any doubt *Mrs. Dalloway*: Virginia Woolf is writing *Mrs. Dalloway*, Laura Brown is reading *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa Vaughan is “living” *Mrs. Dalloway*. Nevertheless, one could see Richard Brown as the most embracing character, in the sense of encompassing the most of the connections, relationships, resemblances and time in general. Clarissa Dalloway stays very much herself even when relocated to the twentieth century. Richard Brown on the other hand comprises features of five different characters from *Mrs. Dalloway*, of the author of *Mrs. Dalloway* and possesses additional features of his own. Not only does he connect the model (*Mrs. Dalloway*) with its adaptation (*The Hours*) but he also interconnects two time strata within the adaptation (“Mrs. Brown” and “Mrs. Dalloway”). Similarly to the unfolding of the ingenious mirroring of Septimus Smith in Laura Brown, the character of Richard Brown contributes to the overall elaboration of Cunningham’s novel which offers endless explorations of the beautiful caves dug behind the characters.

#### 4.2.3 The Moments

Virginia awakens with a sentence in her head, a possible beginning of her new novel. “But is it the right beginning?” <sup>138</sup> she asks herself while unconsciously falling back to sleep.

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<sup>137</sup> Only major characters are concerned.

Then she wakes up again, consciously ignores the mirror, pours herself a cup of coffee, avoids Nelly, talks to Leonard and finally sits down and contemplates the coming day: “This is one of the most singular experiences, waking on what feels like a good day, preparing to work but not yet actually embarked. At this moment there are infinite possibilities, whole hours ahead.”<sup>139</sup> There are numerous moments like this scattered throughout the book, subtle and profound ones, unobtrusive and obvious, but always significant.

Some of these moments are Cunningham’s own, some are inspired by Woolf, and the majority are a combination of Woolf’s brilliant vision and Cunningham’s creative elaboration. In *Mrs. Dalloway* Clarissa will never forget the moment Sally Seton kissed her: “Then came the most exquisite moment of her whole life passing a stone urn with flowers in it. Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down!”<sup>140</sup> This moment epitomizes Clarissa’s utter happiness, the utmost beauty unaffected by time, the point from which she departed irrevocably. In Cunningham’s novel the moment of kiss is multiplied: there is at least one significant kiss in each of the three time strata:

“Mrs. Dalloway”: 1. Clarissa kisses Richard when she is eighteen years old (a kiss as a representation of their love affair during one summer) 2. Clarissa argues with Richard about a kiss, she is not sure whether they kissed at all (an evasion of a kiss as an evasion of a relationship) 3. Clarissa does not kiss Richard on his mouth but on his forehead because it would be dangerous for him concerning his health (a mother-like kiss as a representation of an unequal relationship) 4. Clarissa awkwardly kisses Walter Hardy (a kiss as a conventional greeting, an intimate gesture while not meant intimately ends in a disaster) 5. Clarissa kisses Barbara (a kiss as a moment “suddenly, unexpectedly perfect”<sup>141</sup>) 5. Sally kisses Clarissa’s

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<sup>138</sup> Cunningham, 29.

<sup>139</sup> Cunningham, 34.

<sup>140</sup> Woolf, 38.

<sup>141</sup> Cunningham, 24.

forehead “firmly and competently, in a way that reminds Clarissa of putting a stamp on a letter”<sup>142</sup> (a kiss as a symbol of steadiness, comfort and responsibility)

“Mrs. Woolf”: Virginia kisses her sister chastely on her mouth (a kiss as a brief connection with the “sane” world: parties, visits, afternoon teas, the busy London)

“Mrs. Brown”: 1. Laura kisses her husband and son (a kiss as an obligation) 2. Laura kisses her neighbour Kitty (a kiss as an unexpectedly released passion - momentary, insecure, full of hope)

G. R. Lucas claims that the key moments of the text revolve around a taboo kiss shared between many of the characters, echoing throughout the novel and recalling Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*. He sees the kiss as a defining moment of happiness amidst the interminable hours of the lives of the characters.<sup>143</sup> A moment of promise that never comes true or is simply destroyed before it manages to unfold (Kitty pulls away, Clarissa evades Richard’s kiss). The moments of kisses are undoubtedly of high significance in the novel mainly because of their intimacy, intensity and transience. The evanescence and lightness of these moments, be it a kiss, a fleeting look at a mirror, a realization of the possibility of death or the irrevocably lost youth and happiness, heavily contrast with the heaviness of life and peerlessness of death.

Martin Hilský labels Virginia Woolf a poet of the present moment<sup>144</sup>. He quotes Jacques Raverat, who defined Virginia’s prose as radiating from one spot or as a whirling around a central theme like circles on water after a stone is thrown in it. In Cunningham’s book this fascination with the present is partly reflected, partly enriched by a level of historicity similar to that present in James Joyce’s epiphanies. In *Ulysses*, the depicted action

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<sup>142</sup> Cunningham, 224.

<sup>143</sup> G.R.Lucas, “Virginia Woolf and “The Hours,” *Earthshine*, 11 Mar. 2007 [http://grlucas.blogspot.com/2004\\_03\\_01\\_archive.html](http://grlucas.blogspot.com/2004_03_01_archive.html)

<sup>144</sup> Martin Hilský, *Modernisté* (Praha: Torst, 1995) 153.

is combined with a mythological background and thus the whole story becomes two-dimensional: individual time and historical time blend and thus constitute new meanings. In Cunningham's *The Hours* the background does not stretch into mythological times. Nevertheless, the fact that the three women come from different decades and therefore symbolize a certain stage in the history of woman in the phylogenetic sense and that the numerous female characters, ranging from eighteen to old age, represent in fact the ontogeny of woman clearly shows that the historical element is essential in Cunningham's novel.

Joyce's epiphany is a moment of sudden revelation, a moment in which "the soul of the commonest object ...seems to us radiant."<sup>145</sup> The characters are shown the truth about themselves, the situation they are in. In *Dubliners*, for example, epiphanies appear as flashes of awareness or culminations of the process of cognition. Nevertheless, apart from understanding their particular circumstances, the characters do not go through a new experience; the possibility of reform is only suggested, not granted. Moreover, sometimes they miss an epiphany completely as, for instance, when in a short story "Clay" Marie touches clay, the symbol of death, but does not contemplate it: "She felt a soft wet substance with her fingers and was surprised that nobody spoke or took off her bandage...Maria understood that it was wrong that time and so she had to do it over again: and this time she got the prayer-book."<sup>146</sup> Or when Eveline, the only character that is offered a concrete opportunity to change her life, decides not to leave with her boyfriend. Only the reader, not Eveline, is aware of the missed opportunity and of the unnecessary return to the gloomy reality (Dublin is depicted as a gloomy city, covered with darkness most of the time). Nevertheless, most of the epiphanies are lived through by the characters, who are extruded from the darkness of the momentary and enabled to see themselves and their lives from a wider perspective. In "The Dead" Gabriel compares himself to Michael Furey, the first love of his wife, and realizes that he himself

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<sup>145</sup> James Joyce, *Stephen Hero* (New York: New Directions, 1963) 213.

<sup>146</sup> James Joyce, *Dubliners* (London: Grafton Books, 1977) 96.

never really loved a woman: “Generous tears filled Gabriel’s eyes. He had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love.”<sup>147</sup> Gabriel watches snow falling on the ground and, in contrast with the moment of his speech at the party, sees a connection between the past and the present, between the living and the dead: “His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.”<sup>148</sup> Joyce’s epiphanies enable the characters to understand the symbolic meaning of the moment they are in. By this comprehension the moment ceases to be momentary.

Woolf’s “moments of being” are moments of absolute conscious experience, deep feelings and passions, but they do not offer any revelations. Woolf contrasts “moments of being” which the individual is aware of when s/he experiences them with “moments of non-being” which are “not lived consciously” but instead embedded in a “kind of nondescript cotton wool”<sup>149</sup> (routine tasks).

For heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh; but the veriest frumps, the most dejected of miseries sitting on doorsteps (drink their downfall) do the same; can’t be dealt with, she felt positive, by Acts of Parliament for that very reason: they love life. In people’s eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, moto cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Joyce, 200.

<sup>148</sup> Joyce, 201.

<sup>149</sup> Virginia Woolf, “A Sketch of the Past” in *Moments of Being* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1985)70.

<sup>150</sup> Virginia Woolf: *Mrs. Dalloway* (London: Penguin Books, 2000) 4.



There are two time levels of “moments of being”: the present and the past. “Moments of being” can be either experienced or re-experienced. When experienced (in the present) no revelation is offered (for example the previous extract), when re-experienced, i.e. removed from the past and transferred into the present, a meaning emerges which was not visible before and which has originated from the chain of moments following the original one. The re-experienced moments of being thus remind one of Joyce’s epiphanies. They allow the character and/or the reader to understand, at least partly, what the moment in the past actually meant.

And it was intolerable, and when it came to that scene in the little garden by the fountain, she had to break with him or they would have been destroyed, both of them ruined, she was convinced; though she had borne about with her for years like an arrow sticking in her heart the grief, the anguish; and then the horror of the moment when some one told her at a concert that he had married a woman met on the boat going to India! <sup>151</sup> Never should she forget all that!

Mrs. Dalloway re-experiences one of the crucial moments of her life – the break up with Peter. Back then she sacrificed passion for the security and tranquility of an upper-class life. She is seemingly enjoying her style of life, full of parties, dinners and conventional chats. She despises Richard in a way, claims that “his whole life had been a failure”<sup>152</sup>. Nevertheless, for an equanimous person her feelings about the decision she made are still immensely intense (see the underlining). The mere thinking about the break-up by the fountain gives her a pain, as if she had an arrow sticking in her heart, the memory of her finding out about Peter’s marriage horrifies her. At times, Mrs. Dalloway wishes for a possibility to turn back time and chose the difficult life with Peter. But at the next moment she

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<sup>151</sup> Woolf, 8.

<sup>152</sup> Woolf, 8. (underlining done by me)

realizes that there is no such possibility and that her life is what she chose and therefore that which she should be living.

Cunningham's characters are browsing through Woolfian "moments of being" in order to arrive at a crucial epiphany, which offers them a rough picture of themselves (similar to Joyce's gloomy revelations) and direct them towards their future. There are two important aspects of Cunningham's "moments of being" and epiphanies. Firstly, the repetition of several moments (the moment of kisses, the moment of beginning of a project, the moment of failure etc.) within the lives of several characters gives the "moments of being" an essence of historicity and draws them near to Joyce's prose. Secondly, Cunningham's epiphanies are much more explicit, the characters are much more aware of them and consequently much more devastated by them - which leads them to an active solution:

It had seemed like the beginning of happiness, and Clarissa is still sometimes shocked, more than thirty years later, to realize that it was happiness; that the entire experience lay in a kiss and a walk, the anticipation of dinner and a book... What lives undimmed in Clarissa's mind more than three decades later is a kiss at dusk on a patch of dead grass, and a walk around a pond as mosquitoes droned in the darkening air. There is still that singular perfection, and it's perfect in part because it seemed, at the time, so clearly to promise more. Now she knows: That was the moment, right then. There has been no other.<sup>153</sup>

Clarissa *knows* that it was happiness back then. She feels that in comparison with the past her present life is trivial. Nevertheless, the epiphany comes only after the death of her past – the death of Richard. Only then she fully understands her situation and by re-evaluating the trivial sets off on the path towards finding her happiness again.

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<sup>153</sup> Cunningham, 98.

#### 4.2.4 The End

##### Song

We wave a handkerchief on parting,  
Every day something is ending,  
Something beautiful is ending.

The carrier pigeon beats the air returning,  
With hope or without hope,  
We're always returning.

Go dry your tears,  
And smile with eyes still smarting,  
Everyday something is starting,<sup>154</sup>  
Something beautiful is starting.

„...not a large or spectacular fight, just a squabble on a corner [...] it seems so definitive; it seems like the moment at which one possible future ended and a new one began.”

Jaroslav Seifert's poem "Song" as well as a quotation from *The Hours* contain the idea of necessity of the extinction of one element for the inception of a new element. One has to part with something or someone in order to be able to open one's eyes wide enough to find something or someone new. Cunningham does not say it as light-heartedly and playfully as Seifert, nevertheless, the very same notion is quite visible throughout *The Hours*. The moment of Richard's death can be seen as Clarissa's point of departure, the moment when she regains her own life, starts living for the sake of living her own life not someone else's.

In the last chapters of the book *The Hours*, the definitive destiny of the characters is being resolved. In "Mrs. Woolf" Clarissa Dalloway's and Septimus's destiny is being decided about: Clarissa's is being saved whereas Septimus's sacrificed:

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<sup>154</sup> *The Poetry of Jaroslav Seifert*, trans. Ewald Osers (North Haven: Catbird Press, 1998) 38.

<sup>155</sup> Cunningham, 52.

Clarissa Dalloway will have loved a woman, yes; another woman, when she was young. She and the woman will have had a kiss, one kiss, like the singular enchanted kisses in fairy tales, and Clarissa will carry the memory of that kiss, the soaring hope of it, all her life. She will never find a love like that which the lone kiss seemed to offer.<sup>156</sup>

And further:

“Clarissa, sane Clarissa – exultant, ordinary Clarissa – will go on, loving London. Loving her life of ordinary pleasures, and someone else, a deranged poet, a visionary, will be the one to die.”<sup>157</sup>

This resolution is twofold since Virginia Woolf is not only determining the lot of her fictional characters from the beginning of the twentieth century but also of those of Cunningham from the end of the twentieth century: Richard Brown commits suicide, Clarissa goes on living. The female Septimus - Laura, though juggling with the idea of death, puts up with the mere possibility of death. The idea of death as being something as easy as checking into a hotel room attracts her immensely but she resists it. (It is not accidental that Richard let his mother die in his novel. As a child he was able to sense her quiet despair, caused by her living at the wrong place in the wrong time.). On this June day, Laura wakes up and knows it is going to be a difficult day by the end of which she will find a solution of her life. Therefore, when she comes to Dan’s bed in the evening she already has plans in her head for the future – she will escape far away:

“So,” Dan says after a while. “Are you coming to bed?”

“Yes,” she says.

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<sup>156</sup> Cunningham, 210.

<sup>157</sup> Cunningham, 211.

From far away, she can hear a dog barking.”<sup>158</sup>

The very last chapter – the unexpected denouement - is “Mrs. Dalloway“ in which Laura Brown literally enters a different epoch and thus joins the separate threads of the lives of several characters. “It’s time for this day to be over”, says Sally and thus reminds Clarissa, who is no longer Mrs. Dalloway, because there is no one to call her that, of the comfort stemming from regularity, circularity and steadiness. Even the most terrible day will cease to exist and will be substituted by a new one. Even the most terrible life can be “killed” either by the absolute death or by a simple twist of faith. Sally’s sentence makes it clear that all the moments are temporary, even the tragic ones, and that they do not have any supertemporal, absolute meaning. After this day will be over, the next day will bring new moments, new meanings and new revelations. The present is exposed to the future, waiting to be defined and re-defined by the future after the future, which is yet to come.

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<sup>158</sup> Cunningham, 215.

### 4.3 Stephen Daldry's Time and Struggle



“Sorry. I seem to keep thinking things have already happened. When you asked if I remembered about the party and the ceremony, I thought you meant, did I remember having gone to them. And I did remember. I seem to have fallen out of time.”

“The party and ceremony are tonight. In the future.”

“I understand. In a way, I understand. But, you see, I seem to have gone into the future, too. I have a distinct recollection of the party that hasn't happened yet. I remember the award ceremony perfectly.”<sup>159</sup>

Kevin Hagopian claims that of all the modernist arts, film has been perhaps the most obsessed with time. In his article “Time in the Cinema“ he quotes a studio executive reacting on D.W.Griffith's use of flashbacks in his 1908 short film *After Many Years*: “But how can you tell a story like that, jumping around time?”<sup>160</sup> He further asserts that since then the use of flashbacks and flashforwards became almost a routine. In conclusion he undermines the generally approved notion of linearity of time by posing a question: “Directors like Alain Resnais in *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, or Christopher Nolan, in *Memento*, weave time in and out

<sup>159</sup> Cunningham 62. Different depictions: A scene from the film *The Hours* and the same scene in the book *The Hours*.

<sup>160</sup> Kevin Hagopian, “Time in the Cinema,” 1 Apr. 2007 <http://www.rps.psu.edu/time/film.html> .

of their plots with such daring that they call into question how real time unfolds; why, films like this ask, must time be the linear construction we've always assumed it is?"<sup>161</sup>

Virginia Woolf and Michael Cunningham suggested that linearity of time is only relative. The interfusing of past, present and future as well as seeing connections between different time periods seem to be a natural aspect of human apprehension. Rather than linear, time could be perceived as circular or turning. In order not to get lost within the serpentines of time a structure or a system is needed. In the medium of film, mise-en-scene is one of the scaffolds which function as a guidance for the spectator. The way of acting is another etc. In the film *The Hours* Stephen Daldry had to connect Virginia Woolf with Michael Cunningham, Virginia with Laura and Clarissa or the beginning of the twentieth century with the middle and the end of it, and place it within 114 minutes. Overall continuity was needed so that all the three stories pervade in a coherent manner, enriching each other in a non - disturbing way rather than destroying each other with their otherness. Stephen Daldry explains:

It has to do with a series of leitmotifs. Hopefully it's more fun on the second or third viewings because you get to see more of the connections - my favourite is wallpaper - between the different strands. Apart from the emotional language you're working on, you're working with a behavioural language and trying to find behavioural rhythms and language. The book deals with internal monologues, what could be termed "voiceover", which David very rightly rejected early on. It's about actions, really. When we come down to it, Michael, it's about actions. Which is basically late Stanislavsky rather than early Stanislavsky. <sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Kevin Hagopian, "Time in the Cinema," 1 Apr. 2007 <http://www.rps.psu.edu/time/film.html> .

<sup>162</sup> "Nothing Is the Hardest Thing To Do," Interview with Stephen Daldry, 1 Apr 2007 <http://film.guardian.co.uk/interview/interviewpages/0,,898195,00.html> .

Not everything can be translated from a book to a film and vice versa. Cunningham parallels the character of Virginia Woolf with that of Clarissa Dalloway when he accents their sudden aging for example: “handsome now instead of pretty – when will the crepe and gauntness, the shriveled lips, of her old woman’s face begin to emerge?”<sup>163</sup> (when describing Clarissa Vaughan) and “She has aged dramatically, just this year...she is suddenly no longer beautiful.”<sup>164</sup> (when describing Virginia Woolf). In Daldry’s film the heroines avoid mirrors, or when they do look in them they seem to be angry. The spectator notices this fact but does not have the additional context to also notice the suddenness of the change: suddenly Virginia’s and Clarissa’s external appearance changed - the moment of realization of their aging disturbs them innerly. Another example is the character of the florist Barbara. Clarissa views her as someone living in the past, largely contrasting with herself, walking towards the future. But it would be quite difficult to express this characteristic in film unless it would be said out loudly – which could be perceived as forced. A feeling of detachment or dislocation mentioned several times in Cunningham’s book is also hard to be depicted on screen: Clarissa sees Sally as a stranger or sees their kitchen as something foreign: “This is not her kitchen at all. This is the kitchen of an acquaintance, pretty enough but not her taste, full of foreign smells.”<sup>165</sup> For just a moment Clarissa feels that she would be happier if she could leave all this – this time and place. Nevertheless, many of the unavoidable depletions are compensated by specifically filmic aspects. Michael Cunningham says:

You lose something but you gain Meryl Streep’s ability to separate an egg with this kind of furious precision. It tells you so much about what is going on in her head. You get

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<sup>163</sup> Cunningham, 23.

<sup>164</sup> Cunningham, 33.

<sup>165</sup> Cunningham, 91.



Julianne's ability to look at her child with a mix of love and terror knowing she is going to harm him no matter what she does. You can't do that stuff on paper.<sup>166</sup>

In the world of film, one author is substituted by a team of people who not only offer various interpretations and perspectives but they offer them in a specific form: in the form of acting, costumes, make-up, editing, sound editing, sound mixing, music, visual effects etc. For example, the costumes by Ann Roth distinguish each time period quite vividly and at the same time unite the three stories by the usage of floral images and brown color: Virginia is wearing loose dresses with flowery patterns, and different shades of brown accessories – the shoes, the coat, the hat, the necklace; Laura is wearing pregnancy dresses (one with flowery details) with a typical 50's coatee (brown) over it; Clarissa is wearing practical outfits typical for a busy woman of the twentieth century: a turtle neck and jeans and a brown coat, and an apron when she is in the kitchen – an apron with flower pattern. Similar distinction is evident in the setting: Virginia is living in a big house veiled into several shades of brown (heavy English furniture made of dark brown wood, thick brown curtains etc.) which leaves an impression of heaviness and darkness. Laura is surrounded by large flowery patterns (on the walls and curtains) and by symbols of modernity and comfort (kitchen chairs, household appliances) which all seem to be evoking happiness and perfection – which clashes with Laura's feelings. Clarissa's apartment looks the most cosy and relaxed of those three (white furniture, white lamps, white walls, beige curtains). It suggests freedom and openness, it offers space – but once again, the heroine is not able to gain from this abundance and feels rather cornered instead of liberated.

Michael Cunningham is mentioned as an author of the book on which the movie is based only on the ninth place in the film (after the actors, casting, music, costume designer, film

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<sup>166</sup> Maeghan Chambers, "Michael Cunningham, Author of *The Hours* Discusses the Film," *The Hoya*, 11 Mar. 2007 <http://www.thehoya.com/guide/011703/guide3.cfm>

editor, production designer, director of photography and executive producer). Stephen Daldry is mentioned after Cunningham. This is another affirmation of the fact that a film is a product of a team of creators. The question is not only “what” to say but also “how” to say it. In contrast to a book, the “how” part includes several subcategories with specific characteristics and potentialities. The element of time is therefore captured in a number of aspects, soaking through the film medium as a whole.

#### 4.3.1 From the Beginning to the Beginning

The very first thing a spectator is able to perceive is the sound of running water. The picture of river follows and affirms the idea suggested by the sound. The water is running very fast like time itself. The idea of fluidity, rapidness and indefiniteness is partially destroyed by a subtitle providing an exact time and place: Sussex, England 1941. Hands buttoning up a coat. A figure walking out of a house. A hand writing a letter. A voice reading the letter. A man entering the house. Three time strands interweave during the Prologue of *The Hours*: Virginia Woolf writing a suicidal note, Virginia Woolf committing suicide, Leonard Woolf finding out about his wife’s intentions – all this mingles non-chronologically and thus anticipates the entanglement and cohesion of the whole film.

The very last thing a spectator is able to perceive is Virginia’s head surrounded by the ruthless waters of the river, offering her ruth in a way. The last words a spectator is able to hear are: “Always the hours.”<sup>167</sup> Then the picture shades away and the music, murmuring until now, debouches like a river and floods the ears of the spectators. Virginia’s suicide is the beginning as well as the end of the film, it is a prologue and an epilogue. It is framing the stories and giving them a sense of circularity. In the Prologue Virginia’s life ended but not

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<sup>167</sup> *The Hours*, prod. Scott Rudin/Robert Fox, dir. Stephen Daldry, 2002, 110 min. 7 sec.

absolutely. In the following scenes one is shown Virginia living in the past – 18 years before the opening scene – as well as living in the future – 10 and 60 years after. Another time strand is added by the time of the projection of the film (2007) – Virginia’s work has survived, outlived its creator.

The theme of survival or lasting is essential for all characters. Virginia and Richard as authors of books long for their work to live eternally – and with the books they themselves will go on living. Leonard thinks about his wife’s abilities: “She may be the most intelligent woman in England, he thinks. Her books may be read for centuries.”<sup>168</sup> But at the same time he is aware of the danger of Virginia’s mental illness, of the fragility of her state, of the dangling on the thin bordering line between the genius and the mad. Every second of his life is endangered by Virginia’s possible extinction. He is so overwhelmed by this threat, by this possibility of “the end” that he sometimes forgets that it is Virginia who actually sees “the end” quite visibly in the dark, while struggling against it: “If I were thinking clearly, Leonard, I would tell you that I wrestle alone in the dark, in the deep dark, and that only I can know... only I can understand my condition. You live with the threat, you tell me, you live with the threat of my extinction. Leonard, I live with it too.”<sup>169</sup>

Richard commits suicide the day on which he was supposed to receive a prize for his life time achievement. This very moment of his being acknowledged as a respectable artist leads him to the idea of him being a failure. It is not his work that is being valued, he thinks, the prize is not an assertion of the fact that his work is going to live, but it is rather his being still alive, being devoured by the terrible disease, but still alive:

[Richard] “This is a group of people who want to tell you that your work is going to live.”

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<sup>168</sup> Cunningham, 33.

<sup>169</sup> *The Hours*, 82 min. 50 sec.

[Clarissa] “Oh is it? Is my work going to live?”<sup>170</sup>

And further:

[Richard] Because I wanted to be a writer, that’s all. I wanted to write about it all.

Everything that happens in a moment. The way the flowers looked when you carried them in your arms. This towel, how it smells, how it feels, this thread, all our feelings, yours and mine, the history of it, who we once were. Everything in the world. Everything all mixed up, like it’s all mixed up now. And I failed.<sup>171</sup>

Richard longed for the survival of his art not of himself, or at least not for this wreckage like survival. He thought that if he would be able to capture a moment, to describe on paper what is happening in the world in a second, then his art would become eternal. At this moment the literary character of Richard Brown may be said to represent the historical figure of Virginia Woolf. Just like the impressionist painters, Woolf was striving to capture a moment. Impressionists gave up steady lines and employed colored dots instead in order to express the elusiveness of the moment of sunset or the evasiveness of a break of dawn on a misty lake covered with water-lilies. Woolf abandons linear narrative and substitutes it with a number of water-color like paintings of moments filled with memories, passions, feelings and contemplations. Nevertheless, once a moment is captured, be it on a canvas or on a piece of paper, it becomes the past. Even though Virginia Woolf was a renowned author in her lifetime, she must have been aware of this paradox. As already mentioned, the epiphanies of Cunningham’s characters are much more explicit and severe than Woolf’s. Therefore, a potential apprehension of Woolf’s becomes a real monster haunting Richard – Richard realizes that he is not able to capture a moment; he failed in his life task.

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<sup>170</sup> *The Hours*, 22min. 33 sec.

<sup>171</sup> *The Hours*, 22 min 49 sec.

Richard is unable to face his failure over and over again. He is tired of the performance he is supposed to deliver everyday in private and which should now become public during the ceremony - the performance of a strong man being brave about his faith (his artistic failure, his disease), fighting on. He controls neither his body disappearing together with his soul nor the sane part of his constantly reminding him of these losses. He gets more and more lost in the world, especially in its temporal structure: Clarissa has to tell him that he has not received the prize yet so he can not look at it: "Are you sure? I remember the ceremony perfectly. I seem to have fallen out of time."<sup>172</sup> Richard keeps thinking things have already happened. He seems to have gone into the future, to remember the future (contrary to the Hawking's question). As a matter of fact he is obsessed with future in the similar way to Clarissa's obsession with past. The bright past of his youth infused with love, passion, beautiful mornings and exquisite kisses heavily contrasts with the dark future which is either gradual dilapidating seeming like eternity leading to death or a jump from the window, a moment of decision, a shortcut to death. What is between these two antipodes is a hardly definable presense, pulverized into meaningless moments, lopped of everything going beyond the mere survival.

When Richard says: "I think I'm only staying alive to satisfy you."<sup>173</sup> he reminds Clarissa of her dependence on past. Richard epitomizes her past and through him she is nursing it, keeping it alive, keeping it afresh in her memory. Septimus is Clarissa's counterpart in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Richard functions as Clarissa's alter ego in a way in *The Hours*. "Someone has to die on order that the rest of us should value life more"<sup>174</sup> is a linking between the two pairs of characters. Both Clarissas lean back towards life after the deaths of their counterparts. Once again Cunningham's pair is more explicit – Richard and Clarissa used to be lovers and are

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<sup>172</sup> *The Hours*, 21 min 30 sec.

<sup>173</sup> *The Hours*, 25 min 16 sec.

<sup>174</sup> Virginia Woolf's Quotes, 2 Mar. 2007 [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/v/virginia\\_woolf.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/v/virginia_woolf.html)

close friends now. Clarissa Vaughan's realization of the necessity to live is directly influenced by the raw picture of death – Richard's plunge out of the window – whereas Clarissa Dalloway's experience is indirect (she hears about a young man from Lady Bradshaw), tinged by other events (an old lady turning off her lamp).

The past is what arouses the most intense feelings in Clarissa. When Louis talks about Wellfleet (the name symbolizing the fleeting moments of wellness in the past?) Clarissa breaks into tears: "I think you're courageous, to dare go visit... What I mean is to face the fact that we have lost those feelings forever [...] I seem to be unravelling. [...] It's probably just nerves about the party, you know... Bad hostess."<sup>175</sup> The appreciation of the deadly nature of past suddenly emerges in front of Clarissa as Louis presents his actual stepping into it and transforming it into the present. By telling Clarissa that "the house is still there" he destroys her sacred picture of the house filled with her and Richard and the moment after the night they spent together and he called her Mrs. Dalloway for the first time. When Clarissa says she got stuck and adds "with the name, I mean" it is clear that she did get stuck, but definitely not only with the name. She got stuck in the past. With Richard the past will die and Clarissa will have to concentrate on the present more intensely. But rather than on separate moments she should learn to perceive the present as a continuum.

"Oh, Mrs. Dalloway... Always giving parties to cover the silence."<sup>176</sup>

Clarissa's life is quilted with transiency, she concentrates on temporal projects, rarely stepping out of the past/momentary present pattern. On this day she is making preparations for a party, a symbol of superficiality and ephemerality, garnishing the path leading towards it with flowers (she places bouquets of hydrangeas and roses everywhere), an emblem of

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<sup>175</sup> *The Hours*, 54 min 41 sec.

<sup>176</sup> *The Hours*, 22 min. 1 sec.

dazzling beauty emanating in a moment and withering away in another. She is trying to cover the silence, the emptiness of the present which offers only a few meaningful moments.

The concentration on small, temporal projects is something Clarissa has in common with Laura. Laura's project is to prepare Dan's birthday party which includes baking a cake. Nevertheless, the obsession with future, or more specifically with killing the future while killing herself is something Laura has in common with Richard (Laura's past is basically unknown). There is a moment when Laura reads parts of *Mrs. Dalloway* in a hotel room: "Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely?"<sup>177</sup> In Virginia Woolf's book the passage goes on as follows: "But that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived."<sup>178</sup> Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway concentrates on life, overpowering death. In the film the initial question is supplemented by the fictional Virginia saying: "It is possible to die. It is possible to die."<sup>179</sup> Both Virginia's whispering lips and Laura's facial expression suggest that they are aware of the fact that they can make a choice between life and death, that life can be overpowered by death quite easily. At the moment of Virginia's decision of letting her character, Mrs. Dalloway, live Laura realizes she is not able to end her life - raising on the bed and gasping like coming out of the grips of cold water.

Nevertheless, Laura's survival differs considerably from Mrs. Dalloway's. Laura does put up with life but not with the life she's living. She makes a plan – after the birth of her child she will leave her family – and carries it out later on. She chooses life over death once again, this time life being escape, death being staying with her family and going on living a life of a puppet/wife and mother. In contrast to the community of perfect families symbolizing forced

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<sup>177</sup> Woolf, 9.

<sup>178</sup> Woolf, 9.

<sup>179</sup> *The Hours*, 66min. 13 sec.

happiness in the Los Angeles suburbs after war, Laura's peculiarity does not seem to belong anywhere. A repetitive sentence expresses Laura's isolation from the rest of the society leaving her alone and misunderstood: "*We thought her sorrows were ordinary sorrows; we had no idea.*"<sup>180</sup> The inconclusiveness of her situation leads Laura to a radical solution for which she will be never forgiven. But for her there was no other choice. Clarissa Dalloway, on the other hand, feels connected to her surroundings, feels part of them. While walking through London in the morning to buy flowers she feels submerged in the beauty around her; while preparing a party she feels important and happy in a way because part of her, and probably the major part, wants to be a perfect hostess. The glittery surfaces of upper-class society as well as Clarissa's professional face disguise the inner struggles and insecurities: Clarissa is still worrying about her break-up with Peter, still thinking about the happiness of the moment of the kiss with Sally, still fearing aging and consequent death, still contemplating her position in the society while not being invited to Lady Bruton's lunch etc. Nevertheless, her survival, the moment when she becomes reconciled with death and decides to "assemble", to go back to the party, is the moment of her realization of the fact that she does belong to the place where she is, more or less.

Laura's life is saved, but someone else's is not: "I was going to kill my heroine, but I've changed my mind. I think I have to kill someone else instead."<sup>181</sup> In *Mrs. Dalloway* it is Septimus who is being killed, in the film *The Hours* it is Richard and Virginia. At this moment Virginia might not only be deciding the fate of other characters but her own as well. It might be the moment when she decides that she will submerge to the waters and never come out.

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<sup>180</sup> Cunningham, 205.

<sup>181</sup> *The Hours*, 68 min 25 sec.



#### 4.3.2 The Filmic Moments

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38
39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51
52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64
65	66	67	68	69	70/0	<sup>182</sup>						

Within the first twelve minutes of *The Hours* there are 25 jumps in time. The fastness of shifts and intensity of perceptions serve well to a spectator familiar with Cunningham's book but puzzles considerably those who are not. It is quite daring to trifle with the attention of the spectator when s/he is not yet acquainted with the main characters. While in the process of trying to remember who is who the spectator is mistaken over and over again, confusing the three faces of the three women and lost in time while overloaded with too many time indicators. The theme of connection, complexity and compatibility is perhaps well understood by the spectator but it might be at the expense of the syntagmatic connotations, abundant for those familiar with the stories and therefore capable of perceiving them, and redundant for those who are not and therefore have no time for monitoring anything that lies beyond the elementary plot line.

Each story begins with the partner of each woman leading the camera to the woman. Dan comes in a car, opens the door of a house, puts a bouquet of yellow roses on a kitchen table, glances at his watch, goes to the bedroom and peeps in. While hearing the ticking of a clock one is lead by the camera to look at sleeping Laura. After a cut one sees Leonard walking on a street, opening the gate, entering the house and talking to the doctor inside. Doctor's words

<sup>182</sup> Yellow – Mrs. Woolf, Green – Mrs. Brown, Red – Mrs. Dalloway, Blue – merge of all three characters; 0 – the Prologue, 70/0 – the last take, the Prologue serving as an Epilogue

“The main thing is to keep her where she is, calm...”<sup>183</sup> together with the camera heaving lead one to Virginia’s bedroom. With the ticking of a clock in the background one witnesses Virginia lying in the bed awake – in contrast to Laura. The music crescendos and vanishes in the noise of New York City subway. Sally walks in the underground and then on the street, unlocks the door, tiptoes to the bed and lies down next to Clarissa. Clarissa seemingly asleep opens her eyes (she finds herself somewhere between Laura’s sleep and Virginia’s vigilance) while the clock is ticking. Clarissa’s entering the state of awakesness is followed by a bell like ringing of an alarm clock. But it is not Clarissa’s alarm clock but Laura’s. Then a Big Ben like chiming of a clock in Virginia’s room, then beeping of a modern alarm clock on Clarissa’s night stand showing 7:05. Afterwards, a tying hair ritual is shown, uninterrupted with Clarissa’s and Virginia’s face replacing each other:

Clarissa glances at a mirror and ties her hair in front of it. CUT. Virginia tying her hair in front of a mirror without looking at it. CUT. Clarissa gazing into the mirror, biting her lips, contemplating, then bending forwards. CUT. Virginia finishes tying of her hair, walks towards another mirror, stops angrily like if bumped into a wall and pours water into a wash-basin. Then she looks at her reflection in the mirror with a mad expression, breathes heavily and bends forward. CUT. Clarissa raises her head.

By juxtaposing of separate moments of the same activity in the life of two women the similarities and affinities are protruded, the defining elements emphasized. Virginia stubbornly avoids mirror but finally looks at it. She is evidently not satisfied with what she sees. Clarissa seems to be less upset with her appearance but still far from being satisfied. The reason of their agitation is, nevertheless, not clearly revealed. As mentioned earlier in Woolf’s and Cunningham’s novels a sudden change of appearance is mentioned explicitly. In the film

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<sup>183</sup> *The Hours*, 5 min 31 sec.

no such piece of information is provided. One can only speculate about Clarissa's contemplating about her life being trivial ever since the summer during which she was dubbed Mrs. Dalloway, about her life as something slipping through her fingers, running away from her and leaving her with no directions, empty and devoid of beauty. And about Virginia's quiet complaint of her being imprisoned in this body in the middle of the "suffocating anesthetic of the suburbs"<sup>184</sup> running through her head while looking at her beaky nose (in *Mrs. Dalloway* both Clarissa and Septimus are "endowed" with a beaky nose) and a glare - maybe a consequence of her illness, changing everything, including her face, maybe a result of waking up in the same Richmond bedroom deathly tranquil in comparison with the liveliness of the London one. What one does not see or hear opens the door to the numerous explanations and interpretation on the side of the spectator proving the connotational character of cinema.

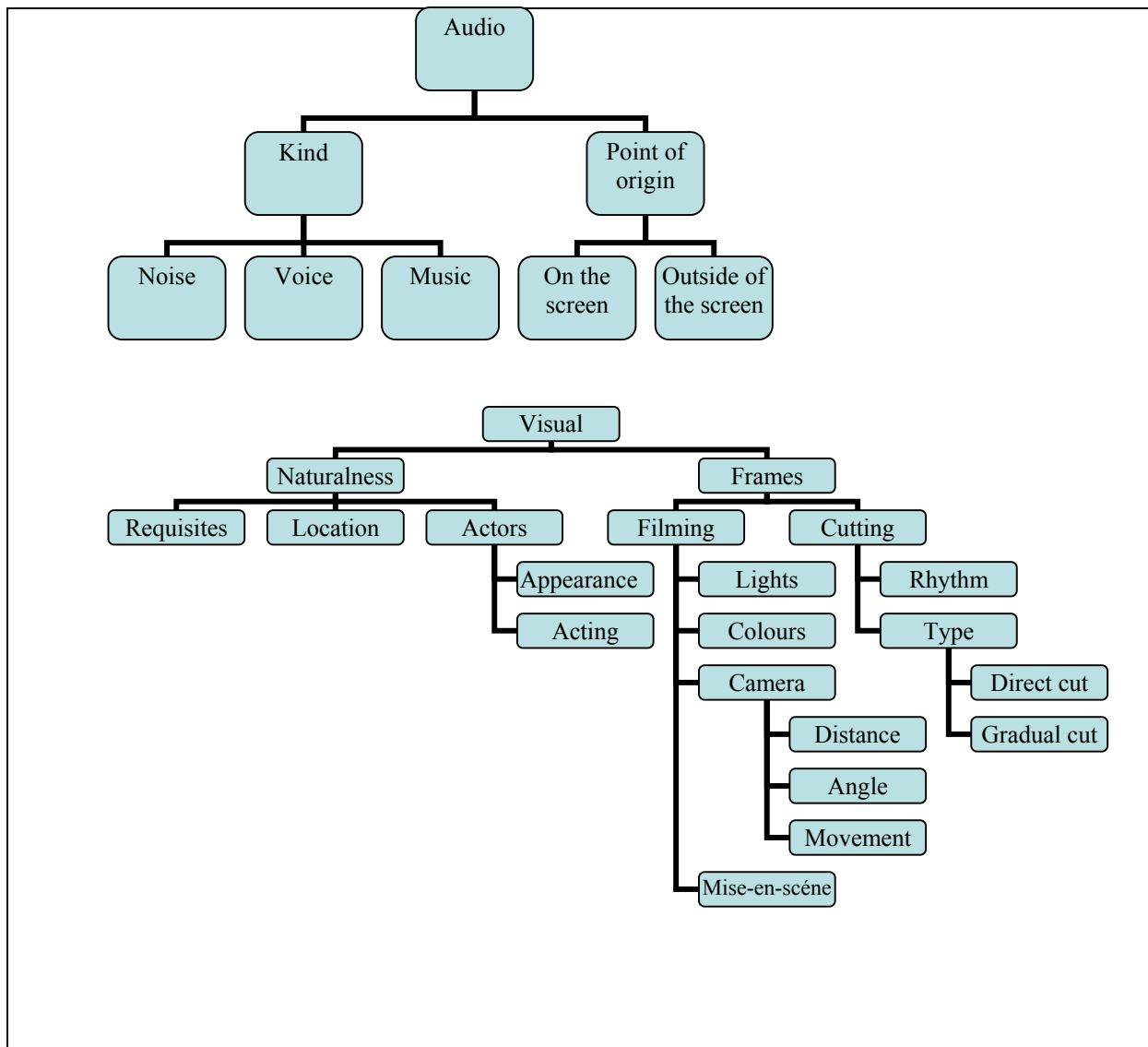
The spectator is often given some hints in order to relate specific elements and draw additional meanings. For this purpose either a filmic device of linking is employed to directly connect successive scenes, or repetition of a particular element is used connecting distant moments in which the element is present. The whole film is based on diffusion: shifts, jumps, and cuts without proper linking like a brick wall without cement would end up in a disaster. When looking at the table from the beginning of this chapter the span of the linking device is well detectable: either all three stories alternate (the beginning) or only two of them (40-51 the binding between the story of Laura and Virginia is focused on, 52-57 the story of Clarissa and Virginia is tightened up, 58-63 the relationship between Laura and Richard is revealed). The following table shows a selection of the critical moments of shifts, or the specific linkings that connect seemingly unrelated moments:

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<sup>184</sup> *The Hours*, 83 min, 25 sec.

Primary scene	Successive scene	Successive scene	Symbol
Dan is opening kitchen shelves in order to find ingredients for breakfast	Clarissa is opening the curtains to welcome the new day		Opening – starting
Clarissa takes a vase with red roses	Dan takes a vase with yellow roses	Nelly trims blue flowers in a vase	Flowers
Virginia opens a notepad and browses to the first empty page	Laura opens the book <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> and browses to the first page	Clarissa starts writing into her notepad	Writing/reading – opening – starting
Clarissa asks herself why is everything wrong	Laura is decorating a cake but it doesn't work		Failure
Virginia is lying down next to a dead bird	Laura is lying in her bed		Tranquility – closeness to death
Virginia confesses she wanted to kill her heroine but she changed her mind	Laura starts to cry realizing that she cannot kill herself		Change of fate
Vanessa clutching Angelica and whispering “Stay close”; Clarissa heaving a sigh	Louis pausing for a moment in front of Clarissa's door; Virginia exhaling a cigarette smoke		Escape – relief
Virginia telling Leonard that he can't avoid life	Laura coming back from the hotel to pick up her son		Life as a choice
Clarissa is in the hospital after Richard's suicide	Leonard asks Virginia why does someone have to die		Contrast of life and death
Laura is coming to bed	Leonard wants Virginia to come to bed		Closing

It is not possible to write or say a number of words/sentences at the same time. Nevertheless, it is possible to hear or see a number of sentences/happenings at the same moment on the screen. The syntax of film includes both the temporal construction modification, which is called montage, and the spatial construction or mise-en-scène. Moreover, audio is combined with the visual and the numerous aspects of these two categories supply additional bits and pieces of meaning. Seymour Chatman offers a table of aspects of what he calls “film narrator”:



Chatman's table: Film narrator<sup>185</sup>

During the birthday party, Dan decides to tell his son a story about how he met and fell in love with Laura. What the spectator hears is Dan's calm voice (Chatman's voice), a bit moved, narrating a fairy tale like story of a charming princess saved by a strong young knight, brought to his castle and living there happily ever after. What we see is a happy husband, enjoying his little party and being proud of his objectified happiness (Chatman's acting). Nevertheless, at the same moment, one can see Laura, playing the role of a perfect wife but obviously not enjoying it, forcing herself into smiles which betray her by the sadness

<sup>185</sup> Seymour Chatman, *Dohodnuté termíny. Rétorika narativu ve fikci a filmu* (Olomouc: Univerziata Palackého, 2000) 133.

percolating through them. Laura does not say anything but the acting code, her expression, changes the meaning of the whole scene (Chatman's acting again). Moreover, the *mise-en-scène* puts the finishing touches to the image of misunderstanding and distance: Dan and Laura are sitting in a living room by a big table (Chatman's location), facing each other but far away from each other (one could be reminded of a medieval feast during which the king and the queen are separated by a long table), colored letters spelling "happy birthday" on the wall (Chatman's requisites) heavily contrast with the darkness of the room and peculiar sombre atmosphere of the party (Chatman's lights). After a cut (Chatman's direct cut) the spectator is shown Clarissa's staring face, devoid of all feelings and thoughts (grey tiles in the background tinge the situation by giving it a sterile and gloomy shade). Clarissa is devastated and shocked. Dan's "this is perfect" largely contrasts with Clarissa's feelings after Richard's death and works as an ironic commentary emphasizing the fact that one moment can be extremely positive for one person and extremely negative for another. Clarissa's despair leads one back to Laura and her inner tragedy. While still seeing Clarissa, the spectator can hear Leonard's voice posing the question: "Why does someone have to die?"<sup>186</sup> At this moment three time levels connect, within one minute three stories are shown in the light of the theme of contrast between life and death. This is not possible in a book. As mentioned earlier it is not possible to describe everything on the scene because it would take too long and furthermore, it would place distance between the individual scenes, disabling direct contrast between them. Moreover, it would be very confusing for the reader to jump constantly from one scene to another and monotonous for the writer to introduce each scene so that the reader is aware of the jump.

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<sup>186</sup> The Hours, 96 min, 26 sec.

<b>Repetitive element</b>	<b>Implementation</b>
Flowers	Flowers in vases, flowery patterns on cloths and in the interiors, buying flowers
Kisses	See Chapter 4 for a thorough analysis
Sentences	Mrs. Dalloway said, she would buy the flowers herself./ Mrs. Dalloway said, she would buy the flowers herself./Sally, I think I'll buy the flowers myself. (Virginia/Laura/Clarissa)  I don't think two people could have been happier than we have been. (Virginia/Richard)
Question of happiness	Vaness says Virginia is a happy woman because she is leading two lives; Kitty says Laura is a happy woman because she is a mother; Laura says Clarissa is a happy woman because she has a child she wanted; Dan has an explicit idea of happiness and naively thinks Laura is the happy woman sharing it with him
Project	A party for Richard, a small birthday party for Dan, a book.

The repetitive elements connecting disparate moments in the film, as the second table shows, are similar to those used in a book. The reader/spectator picks up these elements as he goes through the text/film, refreshes them as he finds them over and over again and in the end, encouraged by the repetitiveness, tries to find an overall meaning – he elevates these elements to symbols. A symbol, as discussed earlier, is a conventional sign, an object, a character or other concrete representation which stands for an idea, concept or abstraction. James Monaco classifies symbols as one of the three types of cinematic signs. A symbolic sign demands neither resemblance to its object, like an icon, nor an existential bond with it, like an index. Indexical and iconic aspects are by far the most powerful in cinema, the symbolic are limited and secondary. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to exclude the symbolic aspect completely as all three overlap and co-exist. Monaco also asserts that symbol is a typical literary sign. Nevertheless, at this point it is essential to distinguish between the linguistic sign as a symbol in a narrow and scientific sense (words are symbols) and symbol in a broader sense. Saussure claims that: “One characteristic of the symbol is that it is never wholly arbitrary; it is not empty, for there is the rudiment of a natural bond between the signifier and the signified. The

symbol of justice, a pair of scales, could not be replaced by just any other symbol, such as a chariot.”<sup>187</sup>

Symbols as results of linking devices, i.e. juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated moments, and of repetition, i.e. reappearance of the same element at moments distant from one another, are conventional meanings based on the previous experience of the spectator. This experience can be both filmic and literary since, as already pointed out in the theoretical part of this thesis, film draws substantially from other media. In Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, each character is defined in a way by his/her way of dealing with flowers: Clarissa is happy among flowers in the flower shop, plunging into the variety of colours, scents and shapes; Richard and Hugh, reserved and stiff, offer traditional roses and carnations to Clarissa and Lady Burton (Richard carries the flowers like a weapon, Lady Burton feels insecure after receiving the flowers, unsure of how to deal with them); nonconformist Sally combines all sorts of flowers, cuts their heads off and make them swim on top of water in bowls. In Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*, Clarissa contemplates which flowers would best suit her party, maybe irises, but the reader never finds out; Laura thinks about roses surrounded by gifts for her husband but is outrun by Dan buying a dozen white roses; Richard's apartment is almost violently beautified by flowers brought by Clarissa; flowers, still fresh, serve as a fifth guest of the final party for four (Clarissa, Sally, Julia and Laura). Daldry's film *The Hours* seems to be completely teeming with flowers: the initial sequence of flowers in vases; flowery patterns on clothes, wallpaper, furniture; buying flowers; reading about flowers etc. Be it on paper or on the screen, the symbolic meaning of flowers is the same: ephemerality, evanescence, transience. Flowers not only connect all the stories together but they also draw the attention of the reader/spectator to the main theme of time.

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<sup>187</sup> Quoted in Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (Bloomington and London: Indiana Univeersity Press, 1969) 148.



In Daldry, the process of connecting is climaxed by the final coalescence<sup>188</sup> in which all the three stories merge into one single moment: Laura having entered Clarissa's world is sleeping in her bedroom, Clarissa turns off the lights while Virginia's voice articulates the final message: "Dear Leonard, to look life in the face, always to look life in the face. [Clarissa closes the window] And to know it for what it is, at last to know it. To love it for what it is, and then, [Clarissa turns off the lamp] to put it away [Clarissa closes the door and the screen is black]. Leonard, [Virginia stepping into the river] always the years between us, always the years, always the love, always the hours [Virginia's head in the middle of the fluidity]."<sup>189</sup> As pointed out earlier, film is an intersemiological translation based on the selection of suitable signs and their combinations. Daldry is not translating Virginia Woolf, he is translating Cunningham's "translation" of Virginia Woolf. He is like a painter standing in front of his canvas and looking at a landscape. The landscape will be transformed into the painter's idea of the landscape and then transferred onto the canvas by his brushes and the colors of his palette. Daldry does not see Woolf's "moments of being" as being anchored in the present. What he sees are Cunningham's moments echoed within a number of decades, leading to rough epiphanies and crucial decisions. Daldry has a different set of brushes and colors from Cunningham's but his aim is the same: to show the continuity of time, its transitory quality and its power over the three women's destinies.

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<sup>188</sup> The blue fields in the table at the beginning of this chapter.

<sup>189</sup> *The Hours*, 109 min 18 sec.

## 5 Conclusion

Adaptation is a complex subject, ubiquitous but hard to capture and define, praised in some periods and frowned upon in others, a process and an outcome of a process. It is one of the basic characteristics of our culture based on borrowing, connecting, interrelating, gluing and remixing. Nevertheless, the act of transposition and what we could call re-functioning is as old as art itself. Perhaps, it is the very possibility of telling the same story in different ways that provoke the authors to make the attempt over and over again.<sup>190</sup>

In her essay “How Should One Read A Book?”<sup>191</sup> Woolf does not want to provide the reader with a specific procedure that must be followed when reading; she does not want to destroy the independence of a reader, which is the most important quality that a reader can possess. Rather, she wants to put forward a “few ideas and suggestions” based on her personal reading experience. The act of reading as Woolf describes it very often involves pausing, contemplating, raising the eyes from the page to look at what is beyond its frame:

How delightful to stop reading and look out! How stimulating the scene is, in its unconsciousness, its irrelevance, its perpetual movement—the colts galloping round the field, the woman filling her pail at the well, the donkey throwing back his head and emitting his long, acrid moan.<sup>192</sup>

Just as Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* is able to create only when she falls into a rhythm of marking her canvas, then looking past its frame, so Woolf often figures reading as a similarly rhythmic experience. Woolf furthermore depicts reading as a far more complex process than seeing:

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<sup>190</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006) 4.

<sup>191</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader. Second Series* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1965) 258.

<sup>192</sup> Woolf, 263.

The first process, to receive impressions with the utmost understanding, is only half the process of reading; it must be completed, if we are to get the whole pleasure from a book, by another. We must pass judgment upon these multitudinous impressions; we must make of these fleeting shapes one that is hard and lasting. But not directly. Wait for the dust of reading to settle; for the conflict and the questioning to die down; walk, talk, pull the dead petals from a rose, or fall asleep.<sup>193</sup>

To conclude, Woolf comprehends reading as an intimate experience, a complex process of impression, perception, “digestion” and evaluation paced by the reader’s needs for contemplation of the book or a temporary distance between him and the book, a process many times interrupted, yet very compact.

Watching a film is generally considered to be more passive than reading a book. Images presented to the spectators are explicit (Clarissa/Mrs. Dalloway looks like Meryl Streep because she is played by Meryl Streep), it is easier to follow the story because it is duplicate most of the time (the visual is accompanied by the audio), the length is limited/adjusted according to the custom practice (approximately one to two hours for a regular film). However, to be a good “reader“ of a film one needs to find out how to read it in an intensive way. To read a film one must be able to identify its parts. Just as speech is made up of verbs, nouns, and sentences, motion pictures are composed of shots linked with editing techniques. Each of these techniques adds a specific element to the story. The use of a close-up or a long-shot, low-angle or a broad point-of view, fast cutting or slow dissolves, sophisticated sound effects or classical music, these are all elements that guide the spectator, call his attention to certain details, surprise him or bore him, but most of all, prepare a solid ground for his own interpretation. Sergei Eisenstein says in his foreword to *Film Form* that:

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<sup>193</sup> Woolf, 264.

Film, naturally, is the most international of arts. Not only because the audience of the world see films produced by all countries and points of view – but because it is particularly the film medium, with its rich technical potentialities and its abundant creative invention, that provides an international meeting place for living ideas.<sup>194</sup>

*Mrs. Dalloway* is one of those great works of art that attracts many readers because of its contemporaneousness. The question is: Does *Mrs. Dalloway* need up-to-date versions then? Cunningham's adaptation of *Mrs. Dalloway* as well as Daldry's adaptation of *The Hours* are based on three basic principles: mimesis, transformation and interpretation. Cunningham imitates the structure of Woolf's novel (the course of events within one single day, the opening sentence etc.), the plot (at the beginning a woman goes to a flower shop to buy flowers for a party she is organizing, death comes to the party etc.), the characters (Mrs. Dalloway, Sally etc.) and the devices ("moments of being", time strata etc.). Daldry's imitation is even more precise: identical stories, the same characters, chapter like division, identical dialogues etc. Nevertheless, Cunningham's and Daldry's adaptations are by no means mere imitations of the original. Both the literary and the filmic *The Hours* are results of a process of transformation. Cunningham adds time strata and presents three stories of three different single days; he employs the opening sentence from *Mrs. Dalloway* with the intention of providing the basic distinction between Virginia - the author, Laura – the reader and Clarissa – the modern Mrs. Dalloway; he plays with Woolf's characters, molds them and combines them in order to create characters of his own, enriched by the existence of their predecessors but living a new life at a new time; and finally he cross-breeds Woolf's "moments of being" with Joyce's historicity and epiphanies and composes a time axis, by which the characters are connected and disconnected at the same moment, an axis that offers them security and isolation, revelation and darkness and happiness and despair. Daldry's film

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<sup>194</sup> Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958) 2.

is even more explicit, as the spectator is forced by the cuts on the axes of time into making leaps of understanding, realizing how close the stories are and how far it is for the most of the characters to reach happiness. The basis of an adaptation is an individual interpretation. Cunningham could have been fascinated by Woolf's effort to capture the present moment or with Clarissa Dalloway's obsession with the past. By waking up Mrs. Dalloway from the past and recreating her "moments of being" into a contemporary form, by placing her in the middle of the turmoil of the end of the millenium world and exposing her to the up-to-date perplexities and hazards, he is manifesting his own effort to capture the present moment or to deal with the past. Cunningham and Daldry are both presenting their interpretations to contemporary readers/spectators, waiting to be interpreted anew:

Original 1 → Interpretation 1 → Transformation → Adaptation/Original 2 → Interpretation 2

(Endless process of adapting: The original is interpreted, then transformed, then an adaptation is created. The adaptation can serve as an original for a new adaptation.)

Partly due to the surfeit of new media now available, the attention of adaptation studies is mainly focused on themes such as the relation between film and literature. As we have seen in the practical section, the encounter of literature and film can generate exciting and productive new meanings. Adaptation should not be viewed as a parasite, exploiting the original and deriving benefit from it, but rather as a work of art dependent on another work of art at the moment of its creation, but leading a life of its own. Connections to the original work of art offer a new level, a texture of new ideas. One might make the objection that adaptation as someone's interpretation robs the reader/spectator of the possibility to interpret himself. However, the process of interpretation is circular, and therefore leaves the "next" interpreter enough space for his/her evaluation. To conclude, a quote from Linda Hutcheon's

*A Theory of Adaptation* sumps up the reasons for pleasures brought to us by adaptations with which one can only agree:

Part of this pleasure, I want to argue, comes simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise. Recognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of experiencing as adaptation; so too is change. Thematic and narrative persistence combines with material variation, with the result that adaptations are never simple reproductions that lose the Benjaminian aura. Rather, they carry that aura with them.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Hutcheon, 4.

## 6 Resumé

Obtížnost definice termínu „adaptace“ předznamenává nesnáze v oblasti jejího hodnocení. „Adaptace“ znamená jak proces, tak výsledek. „Adaptace“ je tedy popisována jako výsledek modifikace či transformace na jedné straně a jako proces modifikování a upravování na straně druhé. Studie adaptace se většinou zaměřují především na vztah literatury a filmu. Nutno podotknout, že konzervativní přístupy zvýhodňující literární díla před jejich filmovými zpracováními jsou stále ještě velmi rozšířené. Tyto přístupy jsou založeny především na tradičním vnímání literatury jako modly oproti nově zrozenému médiu filmu. Robert Stam poukazuje na stále přežívající kombinaci „ikonofobie“ a „logofilie“, která nastoluje diktaturu autentičnosti jako základního kritéria v posuzování adaptací.

Adaptace by bylo možné zhruba rozdělit do pěti kategorií. Adaptace ve smyslu imitace se objevuje již v dobách Platóna. Platón rozlišuje mezi „dobrou“ a „špatnou“ kopií, přičemž umění, které je podle něho založeno na principu mimesis, zařazuje do druhé kategorie. Aristoteles zdůrazňuje přirozenost imitace a zaujímá vůči ní a tedy umění vůbec pozitivnější postoj. Adaptace jako mimesis pak prochází složitým vývojem, na jehož konci stojí například Auerbachův přístup, tak jak ho popisuje ve své *Mimesis*, nebo Gilles Deluze a jeho pohled na překonání platonismu. Adaptace jako literární imitace s kritickým nebo ironickým podtextem je označována termínem „parodie“. Nicméně i zde je samotná definice opředena nejasnostmi. Dryden byl první, kdo definoval parodii a kdo jí přiřkl zesměšňující charakter. Linda Hutcheon však o několik století později zdůrazňuje především postmodernistický rys intertextovosti, který parodie nabízí. Hutcheon dále tvrdí, že parodie spojuje minulost s budoucností a procesem „dedoxifikace“ zbavuje dílo ideologických nánosů a konvencí, tedy

umožňuje neideologickou interpretaci. Adaptace jako přepis literárního díla pro specifické publikum je další kategorií. Jejím hlavním podtypem jsou adaptace pro děti. Ty se řídí určitými pravidly, které podrobně probírá Jiří Rambousek v článku „Do Children Read What the Author Wrote?“ Vzhledem k tomu, že většina adaptací jsou zároveň překlady, adaptace pro specifické publikum má blízko ke kategorii překladu. I v této oblasti je nutno řídit se jistými pravidly. Překladatelé překládají nejen slova, ale také kontext, ve kterém se slova nacházejí, ať už přímý – kontext příběhu, nebo nepřímý – kulturní kontext. I když je dnes k dispozici řada moderních pomůcek, „lidský“ překladatel v oblasti řeči stále ještě dominuje těm počítačovým. Poslední kategorií je adaptace jako přenos z jednoho do druhého média. Tato práce se zaměřuje především na přenos z literárního do filmového média.

Základním pravidlem pro všechny adaptace je zachovat to, co činí dílo jedinečným, a přidat to, co učiní jedinečnou adaptaci. Geoffrey Wagner rozlišuje tři druhy adaptace podle toho, do jaké míry se adaptace vzdaluje originálu: „transpozice“ se snaží být co nejbližší originálu, a je tedy podle Wagnera nejméně uspokojující, protože nenabízí žádné nové prvky. „Komentář“, tedy jakási interpretace originálu, je hodnocen Wagnerem pozitivně, protože se nachází v přesně vyvážené vzdálenosti od originálu. „Analogie“ je dílo, které se příliš vzdálilo od originálu, a které tedy nemůže být hodnoceno jako zdařilá adaptace. Adaptace v praxi, tedy boj konkrétního autora s přepisem literární předlohy do filmového scénáře, je zdařile zobrazena ve filmu Spika Jonze *Adaptace*. I když samozřejmě nelze fiktivní příběh považovat za základ obecných teorií adaptace, pohled, který je v *Adaptaci* nabídnut na sebe samu je přinejmenším inspirující. Kromě několika definic termínu „adaptace“, včetně té základní, biologické, *Adaptace* pootevřít dveře do adaptátorovi laboratoře a ukazuje, jak důležitá je vyváženost mezi originálem a adaptátorovými představami a jak zásadní pro úspěšný „překlad“ díla je prvotní pochopení odlišnosti obou médií.



Právě „překlad“, konkrétně „intersémiologický překlad“, je termín, kterým je označována adaptace v sémiologii. Základními dvěma principy takového překladu je výběr adekvátních znaků a jejich následná kombinace. Čtení knihy je proces zcela odlišný od sledování filmu. V knize by bylo například nesmyslné snažit se do detailu popsat scénu, zatímco ve filmu je scéna do detailu popsána během okamžiku - realita je zobrazena v celé své komplexnosti. Právě konkretizace ve filmu přináší jeden z hlavních problémů adaptace: nevyhnutelně způsobuje zjednodušení, redukci významových vrstev, které jsou v knize podporovány čtenářovou představivostí, a z toho plynoucí možné znemožnění samotného interpretačního aktu. Nicméně nadhodnocení nebezpečí konkretizace by vedlo k chybným závěrům. Film není pouze denotační médium – objekty nejsou jen mechanicky ukazovány, aby byly rozpoznány jako objekty, kterými skutečně jsou. Významy ve filmu jsou z velké části stavěny na jeho konotačním charakteru. Filmové konotace jsou dvojího druhu: 1. konotace přejaté z oblasti jiných umění 2. specificky filmové konotace. Specificky filmové konotace je pak dále možné rozdělit na paradigmatické a syntagmatické. Paradigmatické konotace vznikají v okamžiku, kdy divák porovnává obraz, který mu je nabídnut s tím, který by mu mohl být nabídnut, ale není. Jedná se především o úhel a pohyb kamery, osvětlení atd., které pokud by bylo jiné, změnilo by význam celého obrazu. Syntagmatické konotace vyplývají z juxtapozice dvou obrazů a jejich vzájemných vztahů. Tady jde buď o záběry jdoucí těsně za sebou, nebo o celkovou filmovou strukturu – usouvztažněny mohou být záběry oddělené jinými záběry ale spojené stejným motivem nebo prvkem. Podobně jako konotace, i další původně literární prvky tvoří základní stavbu filmových významů. Vedle symbolické roviny to jsou například metafory, synekdochy nebo metonymie.

Pro lepší ozřejmění vztahů mezi filmovým a literárním médiem se druhá část práce zabývá praktickou interpretační rovinou. Předmětem interpretace jsou *Mrs Dalloway* od Virginie Woolfové, *The Hours* od Michaela Cunninghama a *The Hours* od Stephena

Daldryho. Z praktických důvodů je interpretace omezena pouze na jedno téma, společné všem třem dílům: téma času. Všichni tři autoři jsou ovlivněni dobou, ve které žijí, a limity média, ve kterém tvoří.

Po zavedení jednotného standardního času na konci devatenáctého století byla nastolena jakási totalita času – čas byl objektivně měřen, jedinec byl tedy nucen respektovat tuto objektivnost s níž hodinová ručička kroužila po ciferníku a určovala jeho denní povinnosti. Nutnost čínorodě využít veškerého času, který má člověk k dispozici, připomíná taktéž protestantská etika, jejíž vlivy jsou patrné v díle Woolfové. Nicméně Woolfová se rozhodla vzbouřit proti této hegemonii, a tak nesena proudem současné psychologie zabývající se komplexností lidského jedince (James) a filosofie odlišující mezi objektivním a subjektivním časem (Bergson) vytváří svůj vlastní postoj k popisu času. Proud vědomí a tzv. “moments of being“ jsou jejími hlavními nástroji, lidské nitro a jeho kontrast s okolním děním, a čas, jak ho vnímá jedinec oproti času objektivně odbíjeném Big Benem jejími hlavními tématy. Woolfová boří hranice mezi minulostí, přítomností a budoucností, spoutává přítomnost svých charakterů pevně s minulostí (Clarissa, Peter), aby jim v závěru naznačila, že je možné vstoupit do budoucnosti (Clarissa).

Cunningham, autor přetechnizovaného dvacátého století, které nabízí odpovědi na celou řadu zásadních otázek, překvapivě stále ještě nemá k dispozici přesnou definici času. Jeho fascinace časem se možná právě proto podobá fascinaci Woolfové: čas je stále ještě neuchopitelnou substancí, hybnou silou, která mění, zasazuje a zceluje smrtelné rány. Cílem Cunninghama nebylo v žádném případě pouze přepsat příběh paní Dallowayové. Jeho základní technikou je interpretace a následná transformace. Cunningham sice přejímá základní témata z Woolfové, ale zároveň je převléká do hávu dvacátého století. Uplatňuje techniky Woolfové (“moments of being”), ale kombinuje je s historičností, dodává jim více explicitnosti a surovosti. Jeho postavy jsou původem z románu *Mrs. Dalloway*, ale spíše než

pouhé odlitky, fungují v mnoha případech jako „slitiny“. Cunningham kombinuje pohlaví, přetváří pohlaví, slučuje jednotlivé postavy (Richard) nebo je naopak roztavuje (Clarissa, Laura, Virginia). Jeho čas je stejně jako celková struktura knihy, mnohem sofistikovanější, komplikovanější a rozvrstvenější.

Daldryho film představuje odlišný druh adaptace. Daldry nepotřeboval vytvářet nový příběh a vzhledem k tomu, že jde o současníka Cunninghama, jeho hlavním cílem nebylo vyjádřit odlišné pojetí času od Cunninghama. *The Hours* představují, pokud bychom použili Wagnerovy terminologie, něco mezi „transpozicí“ a „komentářem“. Stojí velmi blízko literární předloze, tedy vyzařují podobnou atmosféru, nabízejí podobné interpretace. Vzhledem k odlišnosti filmového a literárního média však tato blízkost vznikla díky pečlivému a v mnoha ohledech kreativnímu intersémiologickému překladu. Komplexní charakter filmového média nabízí řadu rovin tohoto překladu. Herecké výkony, scénář, střih, zvuk, kostýmy či hudba, to vše jsou významové roviny, které ve vzájemném propojení vytvářejí celkové vyznění filmu. Pozoruhodná je především symbolická rovina postavená na na prvních pohled zanedbatelných detailech, tvořící však pevnou strukturu, která v četných okmažicích prosvítá pod základním dějem.

Sergei Eisenstein nazval film tím nejmezinárodnějším uměním. Vystihl tak zároveň krásu a zkázu filmového média. Film je dobře čitelný pro všechny, protože používá jakési esperanto srozumitelné mnoha kulturám. Na druhé straně právě ona srozumitelnost, zdánlivá jednoduchost čtení, svádí mnohé pozorovatele k domněnce, že přílišná explicitnost nedává dostatečný prostor imaginaci, a tudíž zabíjí interpretaci. V případě filmových adaptací, tedy přímého „souboje“ literatury a filmu, je pak tendence zatracování filmového média ještě silnější. Přitom si jen stačí uvědomit, že proces adaptace je vlastně postaven na interpretaci, a že adaptace jako výsledek slouží jako prostor pro další interpretaci. Adaptace by měla být

vnímána jako nekonečný proces. Originál je nejprve interpretován, pak přetransformován do podoby adaptace - tato adaptace pak může sloužit jako originál pro vznik nové adaptace:

Originál 1 → Interpretace 1 → Transformace → Adaptace/Originál 2 → Interpretace 2

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